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“THOSE ARE OUR GUNS THAT SOUND SO CLOSE”



# CAPTAIN LUCY IN FRANCE

BY  
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"CAPTAIN LUCY AND LIEUTENANT BOB"



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Captain Lucy in France

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## Introduction

To those who made friends with Lucy Gordon on Governor's Island it will seem a great change to find her, in this second story, so far away from home. She is only one of thousands, though, to whom a few months of the great war brought more changes than they ever thought could be crowded into a lifetime.

Lucy can look back over less than a year to her old life at the army post in New York Harbor before the Colonel was ordered overseas. To that brief summer time when the Gordon family was united during her brother Bob's West Point graduation leave, and to the dark days of the winter of 1917 when Bob was in a German prison.

Even then Lucy never lost hope, and her brave confidence was gloriously rewarded with Bob's freedom. But in those dreadful weeks of waiting she outgrew her childhood, as though even in that pleasant home on Governor's Island she knew that peace and content could never come back to her and to those she loved until America had fired her final shot at Germany's crumbling lines.

She could not guess what lay before her,—what



## *INTRODUCTION*

old friends she was to meet again in strange new places. Yet she had resolved, even before she had any hope of crossing to the other side, that, come what might, she would serve in her own way as steadfastly as her father served, as valiantly as Bob.



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# Captain Lucy in France

## CHAPTER I

### THE SUMMONS

“THE really nice part about doing hard work is that you feel so happy when you’ve left off,” remarked Janet Leslie, stretching her lazy length on the shady grass with arms beneath her head. “Lie down again, Lucy. We have still half an hour to rest.”

“I’m not tired. I haven’t worked as hard as you and Edith, because I stopped to read Bob’s letter,” said Lucy Gordon, turning toward the other girl of the trio, who was likewise lying on the grass, her heavy pigtail fallen across one sunburned cheek.

“U-h!” grunted Edith Morris with closed eyelids. “That last row of beans was almost too much for me. Gardening isn’t my strong point. I’d rather be junior hospital aide all day.”



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Lucy's hazel eyes wandered from her two companions across the wide, level stretch of green, lit by the noonday sun, to where the light, spring shadows of the oak groves checkered its edges. The smooth turf was all cut up into a dozen big truck-gardens. With reckless disregard of the beautiful velvet lawn, busy hands had plowed and planted, until everywhere were springing up young corn and beans, peas, lentils and potato plants. Mr. Arthur Leslie's big estate was given up to raising food for hungry mouths, and this little corner of it showed but a part of the changes that had come to Highland House since the beginning of the war.

It was the second week of May, 1918, and Lucy Gordon was in England. Though only a few miles from London, this quiet countryside seemed very peaceful, but that was only when you looked up at the clear, bright sky, or across the green fields. To watch the people at their daily tasks was to see that not one of them, from school children to old men and women, was for one moment idle, or forgetful of the burden each had to share. Certainly Lucy could not forget it, but she often thanked the constant work for the distraction it gave her anxious thoughts. It was two months since her father, now Colonel Gordon, had been ordered from his home station at Governor's Island, in New York



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Harbor, to the western front. His departure had followed quickly her brother Bob's convalescence after his German captivity, and on top of it had come her mother's decision to put her knowledge of the care of the sick and of children to some use in the country which held her son and husband. Six weeks ago Mrs. Gordon had sailed to join English and American workers in the reclaimed French villages behind the lines, and with her had gone Lucy, after countless prayers to her mother, as well as to Mr. Leslie, her kind and sympathetic Cousin Henry, to be allowed to accept her English cousins' invitation and remain as near as she could to her family.

"I'll take care of her, Sally,—let her come," Mr. Leslie had begged for her in those last, hurried days at Governor's Island. "Arthur Leslie's girl will love to have her there, and it's tough leaving her behind, even at your mother's. I'll be back and forth often from the Continent, you know, and can bring you news of each other." For Mr. Leslie, giving up the active superintendence of his big lumber camps, had organized and equipped a Red Cross unit which he meant to accompany to the French front. In the end he had his way, and Mrs. Gordon, only too glad to have Lucy near her so long as she was safe, had given her consent.

That was six weeks ago, and they had passed



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more quickly than any weeks in the fifteen years of Lucy's life. For since coming to the beautiful Surrey home of her unknown English cousins, she had worked, like them, in almost every waking moment, and longed like them to do more, far more than was in their power, for the cause of the Allies.

Presently Janet roused herself to say thoughtfully, as she blinked up at the sun, "It is harder for Lucy than for us, because her family are all away. Our brothers are gone, Edie, and my father, but we both have our mothers left—though Mum wants to join Cousin Sally this summer, Lucy, so perhaps we'll be left alone. You know your mother wrote how few there are over there to help, and how many of those poor French children are without homes. I wish I were old enough to go."

Lucy's eyes flashed instant response to her cousin's words. In spite of her hard daily tasks her eager, restless spirit was still unsatisfied, and she dreamed, as in the year gone by, of greater and braver efforts.

"That's so," assented Edith, lazily opening her eyes, as she pondered Janet's first words. "Of course Janet is your cousin, but she's Scotch and English, and you're American. Is all your family in France, Lucy?"

"No—there's William," said Lucy, smiling to herself as a little figure came before her mind's eye



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with the name. "He's my six-year-old brother, at my grandmother's in Connecticut. But my father is with the A. E. F.<sup>1</sup> So is Bob—in aviation—and Mother is behind the lines." She sighed, but a quick realization of the truth made her add more cheerfully, "Still, it's a lot to be as near to them as I am."

"I should think so!" exclaimed Janet, sitting up with a sudden return of energy at sight of a quick moving figure among the gardens. "Think if you'd been left way off in America." She turned to her cousin as she spoke with a look of real understanding, for already frank, generous Janet felt a warm friendship for the courageous little American, and found in Lucy no less a devotion than her own to the Allies' cause. "Here comes Mary Lee," she said, nodding toward the advancing figure of a tall girl of eighteen, dressed, like themselves, in khaki working suit. "Time's up, I guess."

The two rose quickly to their feet, and gathered up rakes and hoes. "Time, Mary?" asked Edith, lingering for a final stretch. "It seems about ten minutes to-day since we came out from luncheon."

"It's a whole hour, lazybones," said Mary Lee, smiling as she showed the watch on her tanned wrist. "I want you three to finish hoeing the corn over here, if you will."

<sup>1</sup> American Expedition to France.



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With no great enthusiasm but with obedient alacrity, the young farm-hands shouldered their hoes and walked off across the grass, for the Junior War Workers were under orders, and submitted like good soldiers to discipline. For days after her arrival in England Lucy had marveled at the organization which had marshaled thousands of schoolboys and schoolgirls in efficient squads, under the direction of their elders, and told them off for countless duties throughout the land. Since she herself became a member of the army of war workers she had gardened for endless hot, weary, satisfying hours. She had mended linen and sewed on buttons in the wardrobe room of the near-by base hospital, and had canvassed the countryside with Janet in the little donkey-cart, for eggs and other delicacies promised for the sick and wounded. It was extraordinary the amount of work that could be got, at no great hardship, from one willing and active girl; and when the three got together it really seemed as though they accomplished something, in spite of all Lucy's unsatisfied longings.

It was four o'clock, and the sun had commenced to throw long shadows from the oak trees on the grass, when Mary Lee called to the dozen girls, busy here and there among the gardens, to stop work for the day.

"Phew!" breathed Janet, pushing back the



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thick, dark hair from her hot face, and stepping gingerly along the well cultivated row of tiny green shoots. "I know what I'm going to do. I'm going in to lie down on my sofa, and just be perfectly worthless until it's time for tea. Perhaps I'll play with the kitten, but nothing more strenuous."

Lucy said nothing, but inwardly she knew what she should do. At the noon rest she had only skimmed over Bob's letter, and now it fairly burned the pocket of her khaki blouse. She had not seen her brother since they said good-bye on the Governor's Island dock in September, 1917. She shouldered her hoe and followed quickly in her cousin's footsteps, waving to Edith, who had started homeward through the grove as Lucy and Janet set off toward the house.

Half an hour later, bathed and free from clinging chunks of Surrey earth, Lucy was sitting in the window-seat of her bedroom in the beautiful old house, beside the diamond-paned bay window. Her soft, fair hair was smoothly brushed and tied with a black ribbon, and her khaki uniform changed for a blue linen dress. With a sigh of satisfaction she took Bob's hastily written letter from its envelope and settled back among the cushions to read.



## CAPTAIN LUCY IN FRANCE

"DEAR OLD LUCY:

"Hope you are not too homesick for the U. S. A. It's no use, so cheer up and do all you can to help. But I know there's no need to tell you that.

"I am as well as possible, and, as you may imagine, frightfully busy since the Boches began their last big slugging at our lines. I can't tell you where I am, but it is, I'm sorry to say, nowhere near Mother or Dad, so I haven't seen either of them for a month. I hope you got my last letter telling the good news that I brought down my first German plane. I am a full-fledged pilot at last, and a first lieutenant, with some sweet little Nieuports of my own that can do wonders in the air. Cousin Henry watched me fly the other day. His work brought him near here last week, and he gave me news of Mother, which I was awfully glad to get. Transportation in these parts is pretty crowded just now and letters come through slowly. I shouldn't be surprised if you heard from her oftener than I do. Cousin Henry, like the trump he is, is working for all he's worth. Time and money are nothing for him to give where they will help, and I wish I could write you some of the fine things he has done. I didn't see him long, for we are on pretty constant duty now, and most of my outlook lately consists of German trenches seen eight thousand feet below me, with shrapnel spouting up from them like fireworks. I float around among the clouds and keep out of reach, while my observer makes his maps or gets his little machine



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gun ready if the German taubes come buzzing too near."

"Out of reach," Lucy murmured, with a quick frown. "Not if I know him!" and a worried wrinkle persisted on her forehead as she turned to the last page.

"The Yanks are doing their good little bit on the battle line. I wish there were more of us, but we're not to be despised. Fritz doesn't seem to think so, anyway, from the bombing he gives our trenches whenever our Allies give him a little respite. Father's regiment did a fine piece of work the other day near you know where. I can't write more definitely now, but he, with a number of his officers, was recommended for decoration by the French divisional commander."

Lucy's forehead cleared a little over this, and her serious eyes brightened as she read the words. Bob had only written a few lines more:

"I know you like the Leslie's. If they are Cousin Henry's sort you couldn't help it. Janet's brother Arthur is not far from here, and I intend to meet him as soon as we can manage it. I saw him last when I was ten and he was about seventeen. I haven't a second more to write, so good-bye. Love and best wishes from

"Yours as ever,

"BOB."



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“Lucy!” called Janet’s soft voice outside the door, after half an hour had stolen by. “Aren’t you coming down to tea?”

Lucy sat up and recalled her thoughts from where Bob’s letter had led them, and her eyes from the darkening fields and woods beyond the leaded panes.

“I’m coming, Janet,” she answered, putting back the letter in its envelope and rising swiftly from the window-seat.

Lucy seldom indulged now in the reveries she had once been so fond of. They were too apt to become sad ones, and she wanted only to follow the example of her cousins and do each day’s work cheerfully. Rebellious moments came, and this last half hour had been one of them, when nothing seemed to matter but the endless salt waves that separated her from all she loved the best. But Lucy had gained stores of both patience and courage since that dark day in December of the year before when Bob had been reported missing.

She went out of her room and ran down the wide staircase to the floor below. The big, many-windowed drawing-room on the right had most of the furniture removed or pushed close to the wall to make place for bales of gauze and muslin, for Highland House was the headquarters of the district Red Cross Chapter. Beyond the drawing-



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room was the library, and there a table at one side was set with kettle and teacups, and the jingle of china and silver sounded from the doorway.

"Here I am, Cousin Janet. I hope you've kept a muffin for me?" said Lucy, looking inquiringly at the table and at the small, bright-eyed lady who presided at it with quick-moving fingers.

"Of course we have," declared Mrs. Leslie with a nod and smile, as she handed Lucy a cup of hot milk and water, with a dash of tea in it.

"We've kept two, even," said Janet, pointing to the muffin plate from her lazy seat in a big chair. "It's wonderful what an appetite hoeing corn gives one—even for war rations."

"I don't think I'll ever again complain of food at home," sighed Lucy as she sank into a chair. She had learned some lessons about the value of a hearty meal during those eight weeks in England. There was enough to eat at Highland House, but it was simple food, limited to each one's needs.

"This looks wonderful," she added, carefully spreading the hot, split muffin with a slender share of margarine, for butter was an unknown luxury outside the hospitals.

"That must have been a long letter you had from Bob," remarked Janet, searching her cousin's face for signs of unusual worry or homesickness, after



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her hour's seclusion. "But perhaps you weren't reading it much of the time?"

"No, I wasn't," said Lucy. "I was thinking about—oh, you know—all sorts of things. But everything Bob wrote was pretty good news. He's a pilot, as he told me last week, and doing the work he loves to do. He spoke of seeing Arthur very soon, as they're not far apart."

"Then he's near Cantigny," said Mrs. Leslie quickly, "for that's where Arthur is now."

At mention of her eldest son she flushed a little, chiefly with pride, but that feeling was always mixed with fear, and more than ever now, since the opening of the great offensive. Arthur Leslie had served for over three years, had received four wounds, and had been decorated with the Victoria Cross and the Croix de Guerre. In his mother's anxious thoughts it seemed almost too much to hope that he should be longer spared.

Lucy glanced up at Mrs. Leslie's face, in that moment when her thoughts were far away from the tea-table and the cheerful room, thinking as she had often done before, how gay and merry Cousin Janet must have been in the happy days before the war. She was cheerful still, in spite of the daily crushing weight upon her, but her lips were close set, and her dark eyes had a sad earnestness behind their glancing brightness. "Two sons and her



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husband," Lucy thought. "That's one more than Mother has to worry for."

"Come, children," Mrs. Leslie said, rousing herself after a moment. "Let's go in and get the gauze cut and arranged for to-morrow's work. I expect a good many will be here."

The two girls rose obediently, and as they did so, the ring of the front door-bell sounded through the house.

"Perhaps that's some one come to help us," suggested Janet, while her mother, putting behind her the ever-present dread of a telegram from the War Office, said:

"More likely it's old Mrs. Fry with those eggs she promised to collect for me."

She turned as she spoke to learn from the servant who the visitor was. The newcomer, however, did not wait for announcement, but came straight on, and in another moment Mr. Henry Leslie walked into the room.

"Cousin Henry!" cried Lucy and Janet in one amazed breath.

He carried his hat and gloves still in his hand, and his kind, bright face was heavily marked with weariness and anxiety.

"Your boys were both well, Janet—Arthur too," were his first words as he met Mrs. Leslie's eyes.

"You're not on leave again so soon?" Lucy



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faltered, and as she spoke a dreadful fear clutched at her heart and she caught tight hold of Janet's shoulder as she stood beside her.

"Only for two days," was Mr. Leslie's still unsmiling answer, and as Lucy's frightened eyes searched his he reached out for her hand and took it in a warm clasp.

"Let me speak to this child a minute, Janet," he said to Mrs. Leslie, and the next moment she and Janet had left the room and Lucy was staring pale and trembling into his face.

"Mother—Father—Bob," were the thoughts that whirled through her brain.

"Yes, Lucy dear, I have bad news for you," said Mr. Leslie in answer to that unspoken question. "Bob is safe, thank God, but your father is seriously wounded. Now be brave, little girl," he added as Lucy's hand grew cold beneath his clasp. Leading her to a chair he made her sit down and knelt beside her. "Listen to every word I say, for I can't waste a moment."

The awful dizziness in Lucy's brain seemed to subside a little. In a dazed sort of calmness she forced herself to listen.

"Your mother is only twenty miles away from him, but that stretch of twenty miles is impassable just now. There are not trains enough to carry shells and reinforcements to our hard pressed



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trenches, and Bob, farther up the line, where the press is hardest on the American front, cannot desert his post. Your father wants most awfully to see one of you, and you are the only one I can reach now. I've got permission where it seemed impossible. I'm going to take you to him to-night."

There was not the slightest doubt of Lucy's consent in Mr. Leslie's words, and there was no longer any fear or shrinking in the hazel eyes from which Lucy shook the tears before she met his gaze. While he spoke she had buried her face in her hands, and the promise, made when Bob came out of German captivity, never again to give way to despair, seemed suddenly very hard to keep. But she stopped trembling and sat erect. For months she had breathed the atmosphere of brave endurance. Now the thought uppermost in her mind was this, "I must think only of Father. How we can get to him most quickly." Aloud she asked, "When do we start, Cousin Henry?"

"You're a brick!" said Mr. Leslie, but under his breath, for his own voice would not obey him just then, at sight of Lucy's pale and tear-stained face. He managed to say, "We must leave here by seven o'clock."

The next two hours seemed all one hurried flight to Lucy, with dinner forced upon her, which she choked down somehow, and Cousin Henry and



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Janet hovering about her with hopeful words and tender, sympathetic hands, and eyes that would fill up with tears in spite of them. Then hurried farewells, and the train that drew up in the gloom of the little station. After that came the long ride to Dover. It was not more than a few hours, but to Lucy it was endless.

It seemed to her that days already had gone by, when in the darkness of the first hours of the morning she felt beneath her feet the gangway of the ship that was to carry them across the channel. And here for a moment she forgot her surroundings and stood on the wind-swept deck, silent and motionless. All at once she seemed to have come very close to the great battle-field, for, borne through the misty darkness, she heard, for the first time clearly audible, the distant thunder of the guns.

The water was whipped into choppy waves by the shifting wind, and Lucy, standing by the cabin window at Mr. Leslie's side, saw the dim lights of Dover bob up and down as the ship got under way. The cabin and decks were crowded with people, officers and men returning to duty from brief leaves at home, as well as a number of nurses and women war workers of various kinds. More than one of these cast a friendly, pitying glance in Lucy's direction, but they were strangers to her, and she could



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not so much as return their smiles just then. The courage she had so resolutely summoned up at Highland House was fast sinking. She dropped down in the chair Mr. Leslie offered her in a secluded corner, and, sheltered by the darkness enforced by lurking submarines, buried her face in her hands and cried until the tears ran down between her fingers. Mr. Leslie let her alone for a while, but presently she felt his arm steal about her shaking shoulders, and raising her wet face she faltered, suddenly ashamed, "I guess I'm a coward, Cousin Henry, but I couldn't help it."

"I guess you're *not* a coward," was the quick answer, and, as he had done months before, the day he promised to go in search of Bob in prison, Mr. Leslie sat silent and patted his little cousin's shoulder, with a tender, comforting hand. His thoughts went back to his own little daughter, whom Lucy's unselfish care and comradeship had restored to health and strength. "It isn't always easy to be brave, Lucy," he said at last, "not for the bravest of us."

Gradually Lucy dried her tears, and, tired out now almost beyond the power to think, she leaned back in her chair and fell half asleep. But even in her dreams her father's face appeared before her. She could see plainly his clear gray eyes and bronzed cheeks. She saw him again as he stood on



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the Governor's Island dock, the day he left to join his regiment,—tall and soldierly, in the uniform which always seemed a part of himself, and which he had worn for twenty-five years. The dream was almost a reassuring one, even when she woke, for it seemed somehow as though her father must still be determined and confident. But on top of this came the bitter certainty that when Mr. Leslie had said, "He wants most awfully to see one of you," he had shrunk from adding "before he dies."

At last she made up her mind to ask the question until now evaded.

"Where is Father wounded, Cousin Henry?" she whispered.

"He received a bullet through the lungs. His regiment pushed ahead five hundred yards, against heavy odds, and took the enemy's trenches." Mr. Leslie bent down toward his little cousin as he spoke, but a slow nod was her only answer.

At daybreak Calais was but a few miles distant. Lucy went into a cabin to wash her tear-stained face, and returning to Mr. Leslie's side was persuaded to eat a sandwich and drink a glass of milk. The precautions observed during the crossing were cast aside, and with the French coast in plain sight beyond a narrow blue stretch of water, tramping feet filled the decks, and windlasses began hauling goods up from the crowded hold.



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An hour later, after interviews in which Mr. Leslie showed his papers half a dozen times over to curious officials, he and Lucy walked down the gangway onto the quay.

“France!” flashed across Lucy’s tired mind, with even then a thrill, as slowly her eyes wandered over the varied crowd of officers and men, French, British and Americans, intent on landing and getting their effects ashore, while stores were lowered after them onto the docks. American soldiers in campaign hats not yet exchanged for the steel helmets, French guards with vigilant eyes on everything around them, British officers and Tommies, with here and there a big Highlander in kilt and bonnet—all hurried about their business, shouting what must be said in tones loud enough to rise above the clamor, to which the continuous firing from the front made a dull rumble of accompaniment.

It was a wonderful picture, but it all seemed strange and indistinct to Lucy at that moment. Her mind was too oppressed with grief to have a keen realization of what was going on around her. Mechanically she followed her cousin’s lead, and found herself in a motor-bus bound for the Calais station. Half a dozen English and as many American officers shared the crowded seats. The Americans were strangers to her, and she was glad of it.



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The ride was short, and then, after an hour's wait, they were on board a train again, still crowded in with soldiers and war workers. Mr. Leslie urged Lucy to try to sleep a little, but she could not. The guns were like thunder in the first mutter of an approaching storm, and they were nearing the storm every moment. About her sounded shouting voices as the slow train moved on, with frequent jolting stops and whistled signals.

Beyond the windows a lovely spring sun shone down on the French fields and orchards, and as the train followed the French coast line toward Boulogne, her tired eyes brightened at sight of the lovely scene unfolding on every side.

Here was France unconquered, undespoiled, still in the beauty of its springtime, as in the days of peace. The guns pounded at its doors and troop-trains passed and repassed endlessly to its defense through a world of green meadows and apple blossoms. Women and children thronged the fields, hard at work cultivating the ripening crops. They stopped to wave friendly greetings to the soldiers in the train. Near every red-roofed farmhouse grew a little orchard, laden with pink and fragrant-smelling blossoms. Through the open windows Lucy caught whiffs of the sweet air, and, closing her eyes a moment, could not believe she was nearing the great battle-field.



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After an hour they left the countryside behind to enter Boulogne, and in the noise and confusion of the big station Mr. Leslie insisted on Lucy's getting down with him for something to eat. It was a hurried meal, taken among a crowd of traveling officers and soldiers, for the train made only a short stop.

"A quarter of our journey is over," Mr. Leslie told her, trying to put a little hopeful encouragement into his voice, when they had started on their way again.

Only a day ago, Lucy thought, as head on hand she stared out at the flowery meadows, while the train continued its slow way south, this journey had held for her all that was marvelous and unobtainable. In fancy she had made it more than once, with quickening breath and beating heart. To be in France—heroic France—nearing the very field over which Bob had flown so boldly, the land where the hard-pressed Allies stood undaunted. But now she no longer looked with pleasure at that lovely landscape outside the window. She was in a strange, far country; America was thousands of watery miles away, and her father lay wounded—alone, and wanting her. The train seemed a cruel tyrant as it lagged along, and she saw nothing but her father's face, then her mother's, tired and despairing, from where she vainly sought to reach him.



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It was after a long morning's travel that Mr. Leslie pointed out the majestic walls of Amiens Cathedral above the distant town. Lucy nodded silently, her eyes upon the noble beauty of it, but her mind wandering eastward beyond. The noise of the guns, until now merged into one muffled roar, seemed all at once to break apart into a hundred mighty voices. Overpowered with a terrible sense of dread she clasped Mr. Leslie's hand for comfort, and felt it close over hers with a kind, understanding pressure.

"Are we almost there?" she asked faintly.

"Only an hour more, when we've passed Amiens," was the hopeful answer. "Then a short ride in whatever we can find to pick us up, and we'll be in the town. It's Château-Plessis—taken from the Boches only two days ago—so communications are at loose ends just now. Hold on a little longer, dear—you've been such a trump all day."

Lucy nodded dully, half deafened by the guns.

They were crashing out in one tremendous thundering volley, till the tearing din struck on Lucy's ears and made them ring and tingle, while she shrank back more than once as from a blow, when two hours later they entered the paved streets of Château-Plessis. The motor-lorry, which had made a difficult way among the heaps of broken stone, dropped them before the old town hall, over which



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the Red Cross flag now floated. Mr. Leslie took Lucy's arm and led her up the wide stone steps. A nurse came forward, and some men in uniform, but Lucy hardly saw them. They entered a great, many-windowed hall which had once been a court of justice, but now was a crowded ward, filled to overflowing with cots on which lay wounded men. On the floor lay more men, on blankets or mattresses, and between them stepped nurses and orderlies, intent and earnest, without time to so much as lift their tired eyes at sight of the newcomers. A surgeon had exchanged a few quick words with Mr. Leslie, and now he led the way to a door some distance down the ward. This door he opened, and after glancing inside the room, made Lucy a silent sign to enter.

Lucy was trembling from head to foot as she crossed the threshold. The hand that clutched at Mr. Leslie's left red marks across his fingers. But she fought desperately to hide her fear as she raised her eyes to face the nurse who came forward from beside the cot at one end of the little room. She might have spared herself that effort at self-control made for her father's sake. Colonel Gordon lay motionless upon the pillows, his sun-tanned cheeks not quite hiding the deadly pallor of his face. His breathing was quick and labored and his eyes were closed. But when Lucy knelt beside him and, for-



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getting all else around her, caught his responseless hand in hers, for a second his lids quivered and parted and the wide gray eyes looked into hers. Then the lids fluttered down again, and behind her she heard the surgeon, speaking loud against the roar of the guns, say, "He will hardly know her now. He's but half conscious."

Lucy bent her head over her father's hand, and the tears, so long restrained, poured down her cheeks in a warm, salty shower. Sobs choked her, but she forced them back, or buried them in the blanket's woolly folds. Then the hand she held stirred slowly in her clasp, and at the same time she felt a soft touch upon her tumbled hair. Incredulous, she raised her head, winking away the tears, and saw her father's eyes fixed full upon her. Puzzled and uncertain, dimmed with pain, they met her eager, longing gaze, but recognition was somewhere in their depths.

"Lucy—you?" he murmured, and while Lucy, at the faint smile that touched his weary face, struggled for power to answer him, he added clearly, "Poor little girl! I wanted so to see you. It was hard for you—this journey." His smile had faded to a frown of pain, but his hold on Lucy's hand did not relax, and she, suddenly by some help outside of herself grown strong again, bent down and spoke close to his ear.



## THE SUMMONS

“ I didn’t mind it, Father! I couldn’t leave you here to get well all alone.” Could it really be her old cheerful voice that spoke for her—the voice she had thought never to hear again? She smiled into the wondering eyes once more upraised to hers and went on confidently: “ You’re going to get well, Father dear, you know. That old bullet in the Spanish War didn’t get you, and neither will this one. I *know* it—the way I knew that Bob was coming back, even when the Germans had him.”

Was it hope or only longing for life that touched with a new light the eyes until now so dim and sombre? The surgeon leaned forward, his gaze intently fixed on the wounded officer’s face. To Lucy’s brave and resolute heart it seemed an echo of her own prayers, as though her father felt already what in her wakening confidence she so longed to make him feel—that he was not going to die.



## CHAPTER II

### ON THE ALLIED FRONT

“YOU’RE a good little nurse, Lucy Gordon! That’s the way to talk to a sick man,” said a strong, eager voice beside her, as Lucy left her father’s room at last, a long hour later. A tall young army surgeon, with bright blue eyes and ruddy, freckled face, had crossed the ward at sight of her. Lucy looked quickly up and for very astonishment her heart skipped a beat, while a slow smile lighted up her tired face. For an instant she was at home again on Governor’s Island, in that happy time when her family had all been together. Was it only two years since Captain Greyson had brought her through the measles—or was it a hundred years? Anyway he was a major now, from the leaves upon his shoulders.

“Was it you in there all the time?” she asked dazedly. “I never noticed.”

“That’s not surprising,” said the officer smiling. He took Lucy’s arm and led her through a doorway into a little ruined garden, lit by the afternoon



## ON THE ALLIED FRONT

sunlight. "Here's a bench; sit down until Miss Pearse brings you out something to eat."

Thankful beyond words for the presence of this old friend to care for her in her utter weariness, Lucy dropped down upon the stone seat and looked again into Major Greyson's face. "I'm glad to see you," she said simply. "Do you think—is there a chance ——?" She could get no further, her shaky voice half lost in the cannons' roar, but Major Greyson bent down to catch her words.

"Yes, there is, and don't stop for one moment thinking it," was his swift answer, as he looked at Lucy with keen, honest eyes. "There's more of a chance since you talked with him than since he was wounded. There's a tide in the succession of weary pain-racked days when nature needs hope and nothing else to keep up the battle, and, by Jove, you plucky little girl, you brought it!"

"I *won't* cry again," thought Lucy, fighting for self-control. She clenched her hands together with all her strength, while a solitary tear dropped down upon them. Major Greyson saw her struggle and, prompted by a heavy burst of firing from the French and American batteries in front of Château-Plessis, began to speak of the town's capture.

"Things are still in poor shape here—hospitals and everything. You see, we've been in possession only since Tuesday," he said, glancing about



## *CAPTAIN LUCY IN FRANCE*

the little garden, cluttered with fallen stones and rubbish, to where, through a gap in the battered wall, the half-ruined street showed beyond. "We had a hard fight to get it but, strangely enough, in spite of the heavy bombardment, the place wasn't deserted. Some of the inhabitants have simply stuck it out, German occupation and all. It takes a lot to drive these poor French people from their homes."

"But weren't lots of them killed?" asked Lucy, amazed.

"Not those who hid in their houses at the further end of the town. It was the poor refugees trying to get out of the place between bombardments who suffered most. We are doing all we can for them. Mr. Leslie has worked night and day, I'm certain, since the opening of this last offensive."

"But aren't the German lines still very near? The guns sound almost on top of us," said Lucy, her voice grown scared and trembling again as a thunderous explosion hurt her ears.

"Oh, their lines are more than five miles away. Those are our guns that sound so close," said Major Greyson reassuringly. He glanced over Lucy's shoulder as he spoke, and gave a nod of satisfaction. "Good for you, Miss Pearse," he said. "That's just exactly what she needs. Here's your breakfast and luncheon, Lucy, rolled into one."



## ON THE ALLIED FRONT

A young Red Cross nurse, with brown hair curling beneath her veil, and lips that smiled a pleasant welcome at the little newcomer, came quickly up with a full tray, which she set down upon the bench.

"Miss Pearse, here is Miss Lucy Gordon," said Major Greyson, nodding in Lucy's direction. "Miss Pearse has promised to take a little bit of care of you, Lucy, if you're not too big now to be taken care of."

"Indeed I'm not," Lucy protested, rising to hold out a friendly, grateful hand, which the young nurse took warmly, saying:

"Perhaps you won't think I'm taking much care of you when you see what I've brought, Miss Gordon. It isn't even a lunch, but we're rather hard up here."

"Oh, I'm not particular," smiled Lucy, thinking back a day to tea at Highland House, and to what she had thought hardship then. Now, she suddenly discovered that she was dying of hunger, at sight of the eggs and bread and the cup of chocolate on the little tray, when Miss Pearse uncovered the dishes.

"Sit down and eat it all," urged Major Greyson. "Your father is asleep and, anyway, I'm going back to him."

Lucy needed no more urging, and taking the tray upon her knees she ate the little meal with keen



## CAPTAIN LUCY IN FRANCE

enjoyment, and a great feeling of returning strength in both mind and body.

“That’s better,” remarked Miss Pearse ten minutes later, when some of the healthy color had stolen back into Lucy’s pale cheeks. “Now you don’t look like a ghost any more. Here’s your cousin coming to find you.”

She pointed to the doorway from which Mr. Leslie was just coming out, and picked up the tray of empty dishes, saying, “I’ll take these and go back, for you won’t be alone now.”

“Don’t go far; how can I find you?” asked Lucy, anxiously clinging to this new friend in the sad strangeness of her surroundings.

“I shan’t be more than a hundred yards away,” smiled the girl, nodding toward the door leading to the big crowded ward, and taking up the tray she crossed the garden, stopping to point out to Mr. Leslie the bench where Lucy was.

Mr. Leslie had been snatching a little of the sleep denied him for the past thirty-six hours, and now, almost rested, he looked better than when Lucy had first seen him at Highland House. Her spirits rose unaccountably at sight of his more cheerful face, as she made swift room for him on the seat beside her.

“Major Greyson said Father *could* get better,” were the eager words that came first to her lips.



## ON THE ALLIED FRONT

She scanned Mr. Leslie's face for confirmation of her hopes, and found a part of what she sought in the slow nod with which he answered:

"Major Greyson wouldn't have said it if it were not true; and, more than that, he told me he had hopes. Thank God I brought you, dear. Your father has been sleeping quietly ever since your visit. He longed so for some of you to come, and wondered in his fever where you were."

"Oh, Cousin Henry," Lucy cried, a desperate longing rising in her own heart, "how many days before Mother can be here? Surely the trains must be running better now?"

"They are running every minute of the day and night, but not just along her way, which is north-west. And mostly they are freight cars, crammed with men and munitions, being rushed to where they are most needed. You see, it's hard to tell just when she can get here, for of the several telegrams I know she has sent only one reached me."

Lucy sat drearily silent.

"It won't be many days, though,—I'm sure of that," declared Mr. Leslie, speaking in a more hopeful tone after having put the facts frankly. "Look for her any hour, and you may be just as right as I am. And now see here," he added, rising from the bench and holding out his hand. "I want you to come and get some sleep. You won't be



## *CAPTAIN LUCY IN FRANCE*

any good to your father if you are all worn out. Major Greyson says you may lie down in the nurses' resting room off the ward. I promise to call you as soon as your father wakes."

Sunset was streaming through the narrow lancet-shaped windows of the room and gleaming on the old stone floor when Miss Pearse's voice, calling to her, roused her from sleep. "The Colonel is awake now," she said, bending over the cot as Lucy rubbed her heavy eyes.

Lucy sprang up, struggling to collect her thoughts, as she followed the nurse out of the room. She had fallen asleep almost as soon as her head had touched the pillow, and now awake again to the never-ending hammer of the guns upon her ears, she marveled at it. She smoothed back her hair, remembering dimly that she had not fixed it since that morning on the boat, and wondering how long before people living in a place like this could learn to get up and go to bed as though they lived through regular, peaceful hours. Miss Pearse looked as neat and calm as the young nurse who had taught the army girls first-aid on Governor's Island, though her cheeks were flushed just now with weariness after a long, hard day. "Come in," she said to Lucy on the threshold of Colonel Gordon's room.

Lucy entered softly, for not yet had the useless-



## ON THE ALLIED FRONT

ness of quiet footsteps in the midst of thundering guns occurred to her, and went to her father's side. His long sleep had lifted a little of the shadow from his pale face, but his breathing was still short and difficult, and his eyes were closed. Lucy's heart sank miserably as she looked at him. Behind her Major Greyson entered, and kneeling beside the cot, clasped the wounded officer's wrist, looking keenly into his face.

"Father," said Lucy at last, her voice shaking in spite of all she could do, "won't you speak to me?"

Colonel Gordon stirred a little and opened his eyes. For a moment he was silent, then, as before, a smile flickered over his set lips, and taking a hard breath he murmured, "Lucy—here—where's ——?" The rest was lost as in sudden weakness he closed his eyes again and turned his face to the pillow.

"Where's Mother, did you say?" entreated Lucy, bending over him. "She's coming, Father, truly, she'll soon be here!" But Colonel Gordon could not speak in answer this time. Only his hand, moving for a second toward Lucy's arm, showed that he felt her presence.

Lucy turned a despairing face to Major Greyson, but his look of patient hopefulness had not changed. He motioned to her to leave her father's side, and when, with a backward glance at that



## *CAPTAIN LUCY IN FRANCE*

still figure on the cot, she had obeyed, he drew her outside the door and spoke as though answering her question.

“It’s all right; I didn’t expect any more. This is the worst time of the day for him. I still hope, and have every reason to think he is better to-day than yesterday.”

“Oh, Major Greyson,” Lucy faltered, vainly seeking to put her thoughts into words.

The surgeon led her out again into the little garden, over which darkness had now begun to fall, unbrightened by lights from the sombre streets of the half-ruined town. Lucy looked up at the first twinkling stars in the clear sky, and they seemed the only familiar things in all that dreary cannon-racked desolation.

“You’re tired, poor little girl,” said Major Greyson, when a great sigh had fallen involuntarily from Lucy’s lips. “Miss Pearse is going to take you across the street to the house where the nurses sleep. You will be right by her, and I give you my word at the slightest change in your father you shall be sent for. You won’t be any good to-morrow if you don’t sleep to-night. Mr. Leslie is waiting in my room to have some supper with you now.”

It was soon after eight o’clock when Lucy bade her Cousin Henry good-night and left the hospital



## ON THE ALLIED FRONT

in Miss Pearse's charge. Mr. Leslie had done his generous best in the past hour to cheer her, but without success, though she had tried hard to respond to his kind efforts. Her eyelids were like leaden weights, her brain seemed to have no thought nor feeling left in it, and she crossed the street, which was cluttered with stones and débris, stumbling as she walked, and vaguely wondering if all this were true. Miss Pearse was very kind and helped the tired girl to bed with gentle hands and in understanding silence. But once in her narrow cot, in the room adjoining that in which Miss Pearse and another nurse slept, Lucy's dulled mind amazingly awoke and flashed before her pictures of everything she had seen and done in the past day and night. The pounding of the guns, which had become for a while an almost unnoticed part of her surroundings, seemed swelled to a horrible din that beat like hammers on her forehead, and not even with her head buried in the pillow could she find peace enough to sleep.

For months afterward Lucy remembered that first night at Château-Plessis. The misery of her loneliness overwhelmed her as she lay there wide-eyed in the thundering darkness, beset by fears she vainly struggled to put aside, afraid to look back at what seemed peaceful days behind, or ahead, to what might come to-morrow. At last she could



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bear it no longer, and sitting up in bed she determined to go and beg Miss Pearse's company, tired though she knew the poor nurse must be after her long day's work. But Miss Pearse had not quite forgotten the lonely little girl near her. Before Lucy had left her bed she heard some one at the door of her room, and a kind voice said, "Lucy! Can't you sleep? I'm going to lie down on your bed beside you."

There was not much room, but Lucy made all she could, with a heart almost too grateful for speech, and her faltered thanks was lost in the roar of the cannon. With Miss Pearse dropping off to exhausted sleep at her side, the thoughts that had tormented her weary mind faded off into blankness. At last she fell asleep.

When morning came Lucy opened her eyes and found she was alone. The sun shining onto her cot had awakened her, and, sitting up, she looked soberly around at the bare, unfurnished room. The plaster on the walls was cracked, and fallen stones had nearly blocked up the chimney. Only in one corner hung a picture, as though forgotten in hurried flight. It was of a dog, jumping up to beg, with ears pricked forward and twinkling eyes behind his silky hair. Lucy smiled at it, wishing it were alive. With heavy heart she shrank from facing the new day, and desperately longed to fall back



## ON THE ALLIED FRONT

into dreamland. But, unlike the night before, she felt strength enough within her to summon up her courage and make a prompt and vigorous effort.

“Come on, Lucy Gordon, *buck up!* You *can't* give in. Have they brought you this near the battle line to be a coward, or are you going to help your father and,” scornfully, “they used to call you Captain Lucy?”

Like Alice in Wonderland, she was fond of scolding herself, and could do it as effectively as any one else could have done it for her. Close on top of the scolding she got up and in her anxious eagerness to be dressed and to see her father she forgot to pity herself further, and thought more than anything else that this day might bring her mother to her before it ended. “But if only those guns would stop one minute!” she faltered, as she paused in her dressing to cover her ears, half deafened by the double bombardment.

Out of the bag so hurriedly packed at Highland House she selected a blue gingham dress, for the day was warm and sunny. She gave a hasty glance at her hair-ribbons in the little mirror she had brought with her, and, after putting the bare room in order, went out in search of the stairway. It was close at hand, beyond the adjoining bedroom, the foot of it opening directly on the street. Lucy



## CAPTAIN LUCY IN FRANCE

ran down it, the sound of voices coming to her from outside above the cannons' noise.

The street was crowded with French soldiers, together with a scattering of Americans, who looked very much a part of things as they passed by, joined in friendly groups with the *poilus*. One and all were hot, dusty and loaded down with field equipment, for there were few *permissions* just now, and these men had been sent back for but a few hours' respite from the fighting-line. Lucy's eager, shining eyes followed each American soldier as he passed, all else forgotten but those dear familiar figures, until two women, coming by with baskets on their arms, stopping to smile and point in her direction, recalled her to herself. She returned their smiles as cheerfully as she could, wondering much at the patient endurance which had left their thin faces neither frightened nor despairing. A dozen women passed her as she stood on the threshold breathing the soft spring air, and several children too. All were hurrying, intent upon their errands, but they looked quiet and self-possessed, not seeming even to hear the never ceasing explosions which forced them to speak loudly in each other's ears.

A minute later Lucy caught sight of Miss Pearse and Mr. Leslie crossing the street from the hospital, and she quickly made her way among the



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broken paving stones to meet them. With beating heart she searched both their faces, and drew a sigh of relief when Mr. Leslie met her anxious eyes with a nod and smile of greeting.

"It's all right, Lucy," were his first words. "Your father is, if anything, better. He is waiting to see you now." He looked with some concern into her face, which was pale after the hours she had lain awake, but she smiled with quick reassurance.

"Don't say I look tired, Cousin Henry," she begged. "I did sleep some of the time, didn't I, Miss Pearse? And I feel perfectly well."

"You slept more than I expected you to in this racket," said the nurse frankly. "It takes several days to get so you don't mind it."

"That's putting it mildly," remarked Mr. Leslie, as they mounted the steps of the quaint old building, crowned with its two Gothic towers. "I've been near here for several weeks now, but to tell the truth I'm not used to it yet."

The sun was shining brightly into Colonel Gordon's room, and as Lucy entered it her spirits rose with a sudden great rush of hope. Her father's eyes were open and for the moment his slow, heavy breathing did not contract his forehead into lines of pain.

"Oh, good-morning, Father!" she said, gulping



## *CAPTAIN LUCY IN FRANCE*

down a wild desire to cry, and smiling crookedly instead. She dropped onto the little chair beside the cot and took his hand in hers. "You're better, I know you are," she told him, with shining eyes.

"Hope so," murmured Colonel Gordon, shifting his weight cautiously on the pillows. The fingers that Lucy held tightened and clasped hers, and her father looked down at the little hand in the blue sleeve. "Lucy," he said slowly, as though making an effort to collect his thoughts, "Leslie is here with you— isn't he?"

"Yes, indeed—he's right outside," said Lucy quickly. Looking into her father's eyes she saw that they had grown clear and purposeful in spite of the dark shadows of pain beneath. With a sudden clearing of his brain he spoke more quickly:

"You ought not to be here. I asked for you when I was too far gone to think." He stopped for a moment, listening to the guns. "They're not far off. Our lines cannot be more than four miles away. You must go back to England."

"Oh, Father!" cried Lucy breathlessly, "you won't make me go back as soon as this? The town is quite safe, and I must see you a little stronger before I go. Mother will be here soon, you know. Think what a chance it is for me—to help you to get well. Don't you know how I've always longed to help?"



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A smile touched Colonel Gordon's pale lips as he answered slowly, "You have helped, little daughter; I've *got* to get well. I know it since you came. Before that it seemed easier not to—fight." He struggled for breath and closed his eyes.

Terrified, Lucy started up, but her father's fingers still clasped hers, and, conquering her fear, she sat quietly beside him until footsteps sounded at the door and Major Greyson entered.

"All right—stay where you are," he nodded, his eyes on Colonel Gordon's face.

The sun moved slowly across the floor, as for an hour Lucy sat silent and motionless, until her father's fingers at last relaxed, and he fell into a quiet sleep.

Miss Pearse put an arm about Lucy's cramped shoulders and led her from the room and out into the garden.

"You poor little kid, you haven't had your breakfast," she said, pointing to the tray she had made ready and set on the old stone bench. "We've finished long ago. Sit down this minute and eat, and I'll call Mr. Leslie. He's been waiting to talk to you."

Lucy thought she had never tasted anything so delicious as that breakfast of bread and army bacon. She could not stop for more than a nod to Mr.



## *CAPTAIN LUCY IN FRANCE*

Leslie when he approached her, but his thoughtful smile had a far-away look in it as though he had plenty to think over while he waited for his little cousin to satisfy her hunger. At last she put aside her tray and he sat down by her on the bench, drawing some papers and envelopes from his pocket.

“I’m going off to-day, Lucy,” he began, “to attend to some business of my own, and secondly, to arrange for your return to England. Hold on a minute and let me finish,” he said quickly, as Lucy showed every sign of interrupting him. “I have to make those arrangements a day or two ahead if you are to get through with as little delay as we had in coming here. These papers have to be signed by the proper authorities, and they cannot always be found at a moment’s notice. It doesn’t mean that you must leave to-morrow or even the day after, though I have just had rather a debate with Major Greyson on the subject.”

“Does he wish me to go?” asked Lucy indignantly.

“No, I’ll have to confess it was I who made the suggestion. I said this beastly bombardment was too hard on your nerves. Your father is better, your mother is on her way here, and you ought to go. Major Greyson seemed to think he knows you better than I. He declared that your nerves could stand the strain, and that so long as you were here



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you might stay two or three days longer, for your father's sake."

"He's right; I can stand it," exclaimed Lucy with a quick, happy smile, for it is happiness to have struggled hard for courage and to have found it at last. "I may stay, Cousin Henry—you said I might?" she pleaded, all her fear and loneliness forgotten in renewed longing to be of service to her father, and to see her mother again, if only for an hour.

"I'm going to find out about the journey back," was Mr. Leslie's cautious answer. "We needn't decide just yet on the time for it—especially as we shouldn't be able to keep to any schedule. We shall have to return as best we can."

"Are you going now, Cousin Henry? Which way?" asked Lucy, feeling suddenly very downhearted at the thought of losing his brave, comforting presence.

"To Amiens to-day; to American Headquarters in this sector some time to-morrow, and back here to-morrow night. The distances are short, and I've already booked a ride in a motor-lorry to Amiens. I know you're in good hands, little girl," he added, rising from the bench and taking Lucy's hands in his. "Miss Pearse has promised me to take care of you, and Major Greyson is right on the spot. I won't be gone longer than to-morrow night."



## *CAPTAIN LUCY IN FRANCE*

"All right—don't worry about me," said Lucy, summoning the ghost of a smile as she slipped her arm through his and walked with him to the ruined gateway of the little garden. All around the gate rose-bushes were bursting into leaf and bud as though this spring the stones of the wall were still solidly in place, and the garden paths still swept and tidy. Outside they met Major Greyson crossing the street from the officers' mess.

"Are you off, Leslie?" he inquired, stopping at the gate. Then with a frank nod of cheerful encouragement at sight of Lucy's serious face, he added, "We'll have good news for you when you come back."

"Keep your eye on this little soldier," urged Mr. Leslie, trying not to feel anxious at the moment of departure.

"Don't worry about Captain Lucy—oh, yes," to Lucy, "that's what they used to call you!"—was the prompt response. "I'm going to take her in now to see the Colonel. He's really better, and the guns have slowed down a trifle—perhaps they can hear each other speak."

"Good-bye, Cousin Henry," said Lucy, still lingering at the gate. "Bring Mother back with you, that's all I ask."

On that day and the next, to Lucy's unspeakable gratitude, Colonel Gordon continued to improve.



## ON THE ALLIED FRONT

Slowly he came back from the shadowy depths of unconsciousness, and hour by hour his powerful frame gained a new victory over his desperate weakness. His heavy, hard breathing grew gradually more natural, and on the morning following Mr. Leslie's departure, for the first time in many days, the deadly pallor was gone from his thin face, and the lines of pain faded from his forehead as he slept. The artillery fire had slackened on both sides into what seemed comparative quiet. For long hours Lucy had sat beside him, a silent prayer of utter thankfulness in her heart, her only desire that her mother should come and find them together at this happy moment. Again and again she had imagined the meeting. Her mother's tired and anxious face, worn with a long journey's dreadful apprehensions, and the swift and joyful relief of the good news awaiting her. "If she would only come to-night," she thought on the evening Mr. Leslie had promised to return. Fears and doubts on her mother's account began to trouble her, though Miss Pearse assured her they were needless.

"She may have to endure a hundred tiresome delays on the road, but she will not be in danger," the kind young nurse persuaded her. "The railroads are out of range of the guns. Just have patience a little longer." Once more she repeated



## *CAPTAIN LUCY IN FRANCE*

this as she and Lucy crossed the street that night on their way to bed. Mr. Leslie had not yet come, but it was early to expect him.

Whether Lucy took her companion's words to heart or whether she was too sleepy to worry about anything for long, she went to sleep that night without much trouble, glad of what was really a lull in the bombardment.

For several hours in the welcome quiet she slept peacefully, until a dream began disturbing her until she tossed restlessly on the hard, narrow cot. The dream became a nightmare—a whirling thing about some mad adventure. It roused her almost to wakefulness, but not enough to know she was awake. Was she at home on Governor's Island? The drums were beating wildly in her ears. Now she had risen into the air—with Bob in his airplane. But they were in a thunder-storm, or else what was that awful thunder? She sat up, wide awake, conscious of having called out with all her strength.

Miss Pearse's voice spoke to her from the door. "Did you call, Lucy? Don't be frightened. I was coming in to stay with you." She shouted, but Lucy could not hear her. The roar and crash of the guns was like the noise of thunderbolts above the house—a thousand of them together. Miss Pearse sat down on the cot beside her and spoke into her ear.



## *ON THE ALLIED FRONT*

“ The town is not in danger, but the firing started again an hour ago. The Germans have begun a big attack for miles along the line.”



## CHAPTER III

### A GLIMPSE OF BOB

LUCY knew she could sleep no more that night. She got up and began to dress, with pounding heart and uncertain fingers. There was no use trying to talk. Miss Pearse and her companion, Miss Willis, were also getting dressed, intending to return to duty at the hospital in anticipation of heavy casualties from the front. Dawn was just breaking through the shadowy darkness. Lucy stood by the open window, her ear-drums ringing from the quivering air, and thought of the peace of a Surrey morning, when often she had looked out at dawn on the quiet woodland, and of the first soft notes of the birds around them when she and Janet had started out early to their gardens. If she were only back there! As this thought came unbidden she tied her hair-ribbon with a sharp, reproachful jerk, and answered herself with genuine scorn.

"Is this what all your longing to get nearer to the front and be as brave as Bob amounts to? Slacker! Heavens, what a big one," she breathed,



## *A GLIMPSE OF BOB*

her mind distracted from all else as a mighty explosion shook the house.

“Lucy, are you ready?” asked Miss Pearse in her ear. “I don’t want to leave you here alone. Come to the hospital.”

Out in the street in the half darkness, figures of men were hurrying past, calling to each other in scraps of French or English that went unheard in the increasing uproar. The eastern sky was illumined before the dawn by bursts of red and yellow fire, and the air smelt thickly of smoke and dust. Lucy thought dazedly of her father, then of her mother, remembering thankfully Miss Pearse’s confidence that she must be further from the guns than Château-Plessis. Perhaps Mr. Leslie might be with her—he must surely be almost back by now. Lastly, her anxious thoughts hovered about her brother and could find no comfort there. Was Bob in the midst of that awful conflict? She knew he was, since the attack must reach as far as Cantigny. At that moment, though, it did not seem possible that such a bombardment could last many hours.

Outside the ward Major Greyson was talking with a convalescent infantry officer whom Lucy knew. At sight of her they both came forward, and Captain Lewis said close to her ear, “Don’t be frightened. We are holding them well. Half of



## *CAPTAIN LUCY IN FRANCE*

this infernal racket comes from our own guns, you know."

"It isn't pleasant to hear, though, is it, Lucy?" asked Major Greyson. "Your father had a little morphine, so he is sleeping. He's doing splendidly. Think of that instead of your other worries. It will soon be daylight now, and this won't last forever."

Lucy nodded without speaking, for even in shouts she could hardly hear her own voice. The officers left her, each bound on a different errand, and she followed Miss Pearse into the nurses' dining-room.

The first shafts of light were stealing through the narrow windows and in the dusk a dozen nurses were hurriedly breakfasting. Miss Pearse made room for Lucy beside her and handed her a plate and cup. A general haste of preparation filled the air. As they ate in silence, the bursting shells making speech next to impossible, other nurses and orderlies went back and forth outside the room, carrying blankets and mattresses in a last effort to find more room in the already crowded building. This hospital, improvised by the American Medical Corps, and a second, in charge of a French staff, were the only ones in Château-Plessis, and the need had grown overwhelming.

Before the nurses scattered Miss Pearse brought



## *A GLIMPSE OF BOB*

word to Lucy that she might go to her father's room. The darkness had vanished now, and the clear light of dawn filled the hospital. Lucy found Major Greyson by Colonel Gordon's bedside.

"He's still asleep," he said when she was close enough to hear him, nodding his head toward the quiet figure on the cot. "His pulse is good, and he breathes easily. You may stay here a while, if you like—he may wake any minute."

Major Greyson had risen from the chair and, seeing him ready to go, Lucy hastily asked the questions that were trembling on her tongue. "Major Greyson, where do you think Mother is? And Cousin Henry promised to be back last night!" She shouted into his ear as he bent down to listen, but the bursting shells almost drowned her words. He nodded quickly to show he understood.

"They are held up," he said with certainty. "The railroad is open to nothing but troop-trains to-day. With luck they may manage to get on a supply-train, but I'm afraid they're blocked somewhere along the road. You mustn't worry," he added, speaking as hopefully as he could in a voice which in a quiet place would have carried across a field. "They are well out of danger—further from the front than we are."

Lucy sat down beside her father, thankful that he had slept through this much of the tumult, and



## *CAPTAIN LUCY IN FRANCE*

fell to thinking of Bob until her fear for him grew greater than her courage, and resolutely she tried to turn her thoughts away. Had not Bob come back once from deadly peril? From the merciless hands of the enemy? Remembering her own despair in that dreadful December of 1917, Lucy never failed to find some hope for her brother's safety. Her father did not wake, and when a nurse came to take her place she left him and went out into the little garden. The sun was rising gloriously behind the clouds of dust and smoke blown from the batteries before the town. The pounding of the cannon seemed for a moment to have slackened, even a slight lessening of the din bringing a quick relief to her tired ears. Down by the ruined gate there was a little crowd of people, and she made haste to join them. They were doctors, nurses and convalescents together with a few people of the town, their eyes all turned toward the rising sun, and their hands lifted as a shield against its rays.

"What is it?" asked Lucy of a medical officer who stood beside her, binoculars in hand.

He pointed to where the sky was touched with pale rose above the clouds of smoke. Three little specks were darting up toward the blue. "Can you see those planes? The Germans are trying hard to get a detailed plan of our new batteries.



## *A GLIMPSE OF BOB*

Their airmen have been up for hours, but so far our scouts have been too much for them. Look there!"

Above the mounting specks appeared two others, seeming to pounce down upon them. Lucy held her breath as the newcomers swooped and circled, closing in upon the three below, until a feathery cloud cut them off from the eager, watching eyes.

The moment of suspense among the little group changed to a stirring of anxiety and disappointment, felt rather than heard in the cannon's roar. Most of the hospital staff members tore themselves away to return to their duties, but Lucy could not take her dazzled eyes from that glowing sky. Half unconsciously she followed the little group of townspeople who, seeking a place in the open, away from the pointed towers of the old town hall, moved step by step down the ruined street to the square of which the hospital made a corner. The sun had risen higher now, and beneath it the planes were again visible against a background of pearl and rose. As they gazed breathlessly up at those moving dots that were men in desperate struggle, one of the planes fell swiftly toward the earth. Lucy gave a quick gasp of anguish. She could not bear to watch, but neither could she turn her eyes away. Was the plane just brought down Allied or enemy? She inquired of her nearest neighbor



## *CAPTAIN LUCY IN FRANCE*

in disjointed shouts of French, but the woman shook her head sadly, knowing no more than she. Was Bob among them? Lucy longed most to know that, for better or worse. "It's waiting I never can bear," she had said to Marian Leslie months before. Now it seemed as though the war was all made up of waiting.

The young doctor had left her his binoculars, but she found it hard to use them in the quivering roar of the guns against the glaring sky. If the airplanes would come a little nearer she thought she could find out something. That wish at least was quickly granted. Out of the distance the specks grew bigger with amazing swiftness. Lucy winked her eyes, before which disks of red and black were dizzily floating, from the glowing sunlight. Around her, fingers were pointed in excited gestures, and her ears caught fragments of shouts and exclamations. On came the airplanes, until in what seemed but a breath of time they had grown to big winged objects that hovered in plain sight, far overhead, but not a mile away in horizontal flight. Now they were out of the sun's path, and the watching eyes could look at them undazzled. There were six, as nearly as Lucy with fast beating heart could count them in among the feathery clouds that flecked the sky. The little crowd had gathered to three times its size, and for all the



## *A GLIMPSE OF BOB*

thunder of the guns, the cries of the excited people could be heard in their anxious expectancy.

Lucy gave a quick look around her as she lowered her head for an instant to ease the aching muscles of her eyes and throat. A few people from the hospital had rejoined the crowd and familiar faces were among them. A queer sensation of having caught a glimpse of some one intently watching her—of a keen pair of eyes looking out from among the group of shawled women and old men and boys gathered from the near-by streets—made her glance around once more. There was no one now whose gaze was not turned upward, and she looked at the clouds again, the strange impression forgotten.

The six planes had separated into two groups. Two were high among the clouds, the remaining four moving here and there below them. Of the four one was clearly out of the fight, for in another moment it turned and veered off in the direction of the French and German lines, sinking slowly as it flew.

“That’s a Boche,” said a voice in Lucy’s ear. Captain Lewis was at her side and, taking the glasses she held, he leveled them at the sky. “Now they are in range again,” he added. “Our men are above in those little Nieuports. The Boches below are in big Fokker battle-planes. They could



## *CAPTAIN LUCY IN FRANCE*

eat up our little fellows if they could reach them. Luckily the Nieuports can keep above. That fourth who was put out of the game leaves them three to two—pretty close.” Lucy leaned nearer to catch his words, for in his preoccupation he forgot to speak loud enough. A burst of fire from a big German plane made one of the Nieuports veer sharply from its level poise above the enemy. The glasses stiffened in the young officer’s hands, but in a moment the Nieuport righted itself and rose again beside its fellow. From the French trenches anti-aircraft guns were sending shots that burst below the German craft in spouts of flame. But they fell short of the targets, the gunners evidently fearing to hit the little Nieuports so close above them.

As the battle shifted nearer the planes flew over the eastern end of the town. In another five minutes Captain Lewis seized Lucy’s arm, saying, “Come on—come back to the hospital. They may be over us in a moment.” As Lucy, too lost in that terrible and thrilling struggle to even hear his words, stood silent and unheeding he shook her arm and shouted in her ear, “Come on! Look, here’s the patrol come to break up the crowd. You can’t stay here.”

A guard of a dozen French soldiers with a sergeant had arrived to disperse the people, who,



## *A GLIMPSE OF BOB*

oblivious like Lucy to possible danger, still stood gazing spellbound into the sky. Even when ordered with shouts and unceremonious gestures to get under shelter they walked slowly from the spot, turning again and again toward the clouds among which the five planes darted, each pouring a deadly fire upon its enemy.

Lucy got back somehow into the hospital garden, but there she stopped, and Captain Lewis, seeing the planes were not directly overhead, stopped with her. They were not alone, but the few others stood like them in tense silence, watching the two little Nieuports still swooping about their big opponents in quick attack or momentary retreat, and every watcher awaited with eager hopes and prayers the final decision. Lucy's racing heart beat until her throat ached intolerably and her head began to swim. She clutched at the stone heap that was the gate-post, trying to quiet her panting breath. Suddenly a shout went up around her. One of the big German Fokkers had tilted oddly on its side. One wing was drooping helplessly, its wire supports cut by machine-gun bullets; and now flames darted from the body of the plane and it began to fall. Lucy covered her face with her hands. Then an arm stole around her shoulders and Miss Pearse's kind voice said in her ear, "Oh, Lucy, don't tremble so! I know it is awful to see for the first time—



## *CAPTAIN LUCY IN FRANCE*

but it's war, you know. And I think the fight is ours!"

Lucy looked up again, not trying to answer. The German plane was gone. A quick stir among the little group told her that things were happening swiftly. At that moment the tide of battle turned.

The two enemy biplanes, unwilling to remain beneath the galling fire of the little Nieuports which hung like deadly hornets above them, had made tremendous efforts to rise to a level with their antagonists. But fast as they rose, the lighter planes rose still faster, until a cloud drove in between Allied and German craft, concealing each from the other. Only the Germans were visible to the watchers below. They evidently saw in the momentary check a good chance of escape and sped off swiftly like great birds through the bright morning air toward the safe shelter of the German lines. A perfect hail of fire from the French and American trenches met them as they passed this perilous frontier. Puffs of smoke and balls of red and yellow fire enveloped them, while from behind the drifting cloud the Nieuports darted in pursuit. But the target was beyond the reach of the anti-aircraft gunners. The German planes sailed majestically on, and the little Nieuports, remembering that discretion is a part of valor, forbore to cross into German territory.



## *A GLIMPSE OF BOB*

"They're coming back. They're quite all right, you see!" cried Captain Lewis at Lucy's side. From the little group a wild cheer went up at sight of the two daring little scouts returning unharmed from a battle which had cost the enemy dearly without the compensation of a glimpse at the Allies' defenses.

"They are looking for a place to land," continued Captain Lewis, his glasses pointed again at the sky. "One fellow has a badly riddled wing. There they come—they are going to land on that big meadow just outside the town, inside our lines."

As he spoke the Nieuports slowly dropped in a long slanting course until in a moment the hospital towers hid them from sight.

Lucy stirred and sighed as though waking from a dream. Her neck and shoulders ached so she could hardly straighten them, and her eyes were almost blinded by long gazing at the sunny sky. She looked around, blinking, at the little crowd of people who seemed, like herself, slowly coming back to earth to take up their tasks again. The street had once more filled with people, chiefly women who had paused with baskets on their arms, oblivious of what they set out to do. Now they moved on with hurried steps as if trying to overtake the time. Lucy suddenly remembered the face that she had seen watching her with such furtive intentness from



## *CAPTAIN LUCY IN FRANCE*

among the townspeople in the square. The impression, made at a moment when she was too pre-occupied to give it any thought, was too strong to be forgotten. Some one's eyes had been fixed upon her with a piercing earnestness, but beyond that she had seen nothing—no definiteness of face or figure. In the midst of wondering she remembered her father and ran back at once to the hospital.

Colonel Gordon was awake, lying quietly upon his pillows, his lips set and his eyes keen and thoughtful as the crash of the bombardment struck his ears. At sight of Lucy he smiled and held out a welcoming hand, but the searching look did not fade from his eyes, and his thin face wore some of the old confident determination that Lucy so well remembered. For a moment joy at the change in his appearance overwhelmed her, until the look in his eyes deepened to one of painful anxiety as he said, struggling to make himself heard above the guns:

“You must go, Lucy—you can't stay here. Where is Cousin Henry?”

Eager to relieve his mind, Lucy shouted, “I'm going, Father—soon! Cousin Henry will be back to-night or to-morrow. Major Greyson says he is held up somewhere. Like Mother, you know—she's on her way here too. I'm going back to England just as soon as he can take me. Anyway, the



## *A GLIMPSE OF BOB*

Germans haven't got ahead a bit, and the bombardment is letting up—so Captain Lewis says.” She stopped, breathless, wondering if the firing really had slackened, as in her ears the merciless pounding still continued.

Colonel Gordon's face remained unchanged, and drawing Lucy down to him he kissed her, saying, “Send Major Greyson to me as soon as he can manage it. You are going back now if it is any way possible.”

Lucy went thoughtfully out into the ward and, meeting Major Greyson, sent him to her father's room. Then Miss Pearse found her and took her off to lunch, at which she sat down tired and famished.

“I guess you are hungry,” remarked the young nurse, helping her to a steaming ladleful of cabbage soup. “I would lie down a little while after this if I were you,” she added, with a glance at Lucy's flushed cheeks. “You mustn't be too tired for your journey back to Calais, for I'm afraid it will be a long and tiresome one.”

She rose from the table as she spoke in answer to a knock at the door. Almost at once she came back saying, “Major Greyson would like to speak to you a minute, Lucy.”

Outside the door the officer gave Lucy a nod of greeting and spoke quickly.



## *CAPTAIN LUCY IN FRANCE*

“ I wanted to tell you that we have arranged for you to leave here to-morrow morning. One of the nurses sent back for rest to Calais is going too. I can't stop to give you the details now, but your father will not have you wait for Leslie, in case he does not get here to-night.” He gave an emphatic nod at sight of Lucy's troubled face. “ He's right, you know. Leslie would have taken you off before this; but things turn up so quickly, one can't plan everything. Go back and eat your lunch now. I'll see you later.”

Lucy went back and sat down again, her appetite chased away. Now that departure was really at hand her thoughts and feelings were very conflicting. Longing for the peace of Surrey and its freedom from the terrible sights and sounds about her was mixed with a great and growing sense of pride and satisfaction in her nearness to the heart of the great struggle; in the never-dying hope that she might be of service to the cause she loved so well. Thinking these things she choked down her bread untasted, wishing desperately that her mother would come. Suddenly something struck her ears like a great shock. She started up, gasping, and saw that the nurses had started up likewise, but now they were dropping back into their chairs, with faint smiles of pure relief. In a flash she understood. The bombardment had ceased. Not died away to



## *A GLIMPSE OF BOB*

utter silence, but compared with the ear-splitting din of the night and morning the scattering fire remaining seemed no more than rifle shots.

Miss Pearse said, "Sit down, Lucy. It's stopped, thank heaven!"

She spoke in her ordinary tone of voice, and Lucy, answering her, did not know how to pitch her own voice and half shouted, uncertain if she could be heard. "Is it all over?" she stammered, wanting to cry, strangely enough, and swallowing hard to keep from it.

"Oh, I don't know," was the doubtful reply. "Be thankful, anyhow, that it has stopped for a little while."

Just the low sound of the voices around the table was a pleasure, after the fragments shouted in each other's ears so long. It took some minutes to get used to the sudden change—the long continued noise left a great vacancy not at once filled up by ordinary sounds. The nurses hurried through their meal and rose one by one to go back to their duties. Outside the door a nurse whom Lucy did not know had come up and was speaking to Miss Pearse.

"They came down on that biggest hay-field—the one right outside the town," Lucy heard her saying. "Just two of them. One of the airplanes had a badly cut wing. I stopped to see them as I was coming back from the farmhouse with the or-



## CAPTAIN LUCY IN FRANCE

derly, after getting old Mère Breton's eggs and milk."

"Who were the aviators? Do you know their names?" interrupted Lucy, forgetting everything but her eagerness.

"Yes," said the nurse, turning toward her with a pleasant nod and a look of curiosity on her own part at sight of the little stranger. "One of them is Captain Jourdin of the French Flying Corps. The other is an American—Lieutenant Gordon."

Lucy's heart gave such a bound she could hardly gasp out to Miss Pearse the wonderful truth.

"Your *brother*, Lucy?" the nurse exclaimed. "Are you sure? Of course it must be!"

"Oh, I'm sure! There's not another Gordon in the Aviation Corps. How can I get to him? Who will take me?" cried Lucy, each moment's delay beyond words unbearable.

"I'll go with you myself—I can get off for an hour. We'll have to run all the way," said Miss Pearse in one hasty breath, Lucy's wild eagerness awaking instant sympathy in her kind heart. "Wait here until I get permission."

She was off as she spoke, leaving Lucy standing at the doorway to the garden trying to calm her whirling thoughts and to realize the truth of the happy chance that had come to her. So it had really been Bob all the time whom she had watched



## *A GLIMPSE OF BOB*

with such desperate hope and fear as he fought for his life in the clouds above her! At that moment it seemed days and days since she had risen from troubled dreams to the thunder of the guns that morning.

Miss Pearse came up behind her saying, "All right—come on!"

Together they ran through the garden and out into the street. It was a mile to the big level meadow just east of Château-Plessis, through streets heaped with fallen stones and rubbish, the houses scarred and battered by flying shrapnel, and here and there collapsed in utter ruin.

As Lucy ran on tirelessly, looking only to the goal ahead, thoughts raced tumultuously through her excited brain until her father, mother, Bob and William, the past and the uncertain present, were jumbled together into a maze of doubt and wondering. Only to see Bob—to talk to him—somehow everything would then be straightened out. She thought of Captain Jourdin. What ages since she had bound up his injured hand on Governor's Island. For two months now he had been back in the French Service and Bob's letters had told her of his new and brilliant exploits. How Bob had dreamed of having a part in all this, that was now coming true! With a rush of strange happiness Lucy felt that she herself had now a part in it as



## *CAPTAIN LUCY IN FRANCE*

well. For a moment she had forgotten the leave-taking so near at hand.

“Tired, Lucy?” asked Miss Pearse, slowing up to catch her breath. “We’re almost there.”

The streets became lanes as they neared the outskirts of Château-Plessis. The houses thinned to scattered cottages set among neglected gardens—almost all empty and forlorn, for this side of the town had been most exposed during the bombardment which ended in its capture. In another few moments they passed the last house of the lane and, beyond what was left of a grove of bright green poplars, opened a wide grassy meadow. It stretched with several others, in broad undulating lines as far as the wood which lay between the fields and the French trenches. The nearest meadow was a favorite landing-place for aviators scouting above the town.

A few hundred yards to the left a little crowd of people had gathered around two airplanes resting on the grass. At sight of them Miss Pearse and Lucy both cried out with the little breath left them. For a second they stood still, panting aloud, with crimson cheeks and hair stuck in damp wisps to their hot foreheads. Then they ran on to the edge of the crowd which had collected close about the aviators, eager to offer help and friendly greetings.

Bob Gordon was standing by one of the planes,



## *A GLIMPSE OF BOB*

his hands full of tools. His gloves and helmet he had flung upon the grass, but now his work was done, and he stood idly by while his companion put the finishing touches to the repair of his bullet-riddled wing. Bob's face was hot and streaked with oil and dust to the roots of his brown hair. His sunburned cheeks were thinner than when he had left West Point less than a year ago. He looked calm and self-reliant beyond his years, his whole lean figure filled with energy and decision. He was not yet twenty-one, but to Lucy he seemed a boy no longer.

The crowd made way for her in astonishment as she begged and pushed her panting way among them. Then Bob turned at the disturbance and caught sight of her. His face was a study of unbelieving wonder and delight as he let fall the tools and sprang to meet her. Lucy flung her arms about his neck and he hugged her so close he could feel her heart beating as she fought for breath. For a moment neither of them spoke a word, Lucy too breathless and Bob too overcome. Around them the friendly little crowd broke into delighted cries of sympathy and pleasure. Captain Jourdin lifted astonished eyes from his forgotten work, and Miss Pearse, with swimming head and parching throat, dropped down upon the grass.

"Lucy! You!" said Bob at last, drawing back



## *CAPTAIN LUCY IN FRANCE*

from his little sister and holding both her hands to look into her face. "You're here at Château-Plessis!" Still he seemed almost incredulous, and his eyes wandered over Lucy, while he held her hands, as though he thought his eyes had tricked him.

"Oh, Bob, how are you?" Lucy faltered, getting her breath at last, but struggling desperately with the strangling emotion that caught her at sight of her brother. September, 1917—how long ago that seemed since she had said good-bye to him that morning at Governor's Island. And what dreadful days they had been through since then!

Bob pulled her down beside him on the grass with an eager, searching look into her face. "How is Father? Tell me that first."

"He's better—truly, Bob—much better," Lucy answered quickly.

"He's safe—he will get well?" Bob whispered, and Lucy, seeing the lines of anxiety that had chased away the smile about his lips and the look of tired suffering in his eyes, almost choked before she managed to say, "Oh, Bob dear, he's safe! He talks to me just like himself. He made me promise to go back to England to-morrow."

"And Mother—where is she?" Bob asked, after a moment's silent thankfulness. Lucy's words had brought back a little of the old brightness to his





“THIS MEADOW IS THE BEST LANDING-PLACE”







## *A GLIMPSE OF BOB*

face. He spoke hurriedly in sudden realization of the short time they had together. Then, as Lucy shook her head, he added, "I had telegrams, you know. One reached me at Cantigny from Cousin Henry saying you had come to Father and that he had improved a little. But of course the name of the town was suppressed, so I didn't know where you were. If I could have come myself I should have learned at General Headquarters where Father was. But I never thought to drop down on the lucky spot like this! I was here before, you know, nearly a month ago—before the Germans took the town. This meadow is the best landing-place around here."

The little crowd of people had dwindled, some moving off to leave brother and sister alone together, for Miss Pearse had been questioned until every one there knew the story of Bob and Lucy's meeting. Others, too interested to go, still stood watching with smiling faces, and neither Bob nor Lucy minded them. But in another moment Lucy sprang up from the grass and held out her hand to Captain Jourdin. He took it with a quick bow, his face lighting up as he returned her greeting, in a voice deeply touched with friendly feeling.

"Welcome to France, Miss Lucie! I never thought to see you here."

There was no use trying to put into words the



## CAPTAIN LUCY IN FRANCE

strangeness of their meeting. Lucy tried to say a little of what she felt, and could not. Looking into the Frenchman's fine grave face she saw again the snow-covered land by the sea-wall on Governor's Island, herself and William standing beside a sled and Captain Jourdin getting out of his stranded airplane and limping toward them. She had told him that day of Bob's imprisonment, hoping against hope that he could give her encouragement of some sort for his safety. She glanced involuntarily at his wrist, and he smiled and held it up, saying, "You see, it is quite all right again, Captain Lucy!"

"You are back in the service—that's better than anything, isn't it?" she said at last, and his eyes, lighting up at her words, told her the depth of his satisfaction.

"I shall not soon forget that American surgeon," he answered softly. "He gave me back to France."

"Lucy," said Bob suddenly from behind her, "a fellow I just spoke with here says the American hospital is not a mile away. I'm going to see Father. I can run all the way. How about it, Jourdin? Will you wait half an hour?"

"But certainly! the firing has almost ceased," was the willing answer. "We shall have a quiet night, so it appears. I will stay here on guard until you return."

"Lucy, don't try to run again—you'll kill your-



## *A GLIMPSE OF BOB*

self," urged Bob, putting his arm about his little sister's shoulders and giving her an involuntary hug. "Stay here, and I'll be back as soon as possible. This man who told me where the hospital was will take me there."

"I can run, Bob, but of course you can go faster alone," said Lucy reluctantly, hating to lose her brother for any of these precious moments. "Go on—Father will love so to see you," she added quickly. "And then you will know yourself that he is really getting well."

Her words were hardly spoken when the heavy crashing boom of a cannon broke the quiet of the German lines. Other shots followed before the screaming shell had burst. At once from the wood in front of the meadows the French and American guns replied. The bursting German shells increased in number, and now once more a thunderous din reëchoed through the quivering air.

Speechless with despairing terror, Lucy threw her arms about Bob's neck, and he held her while he shouted in her ear, "It's on again—I can't go now! Buck up there, Captain!"

The old name roused Lucy's sinking courage. She stood erect and dazedly saw the little crowd around them fast dispersing, Captain Jourdin putting away the tools and picking up his helmet, and Miss Pearse running quickly to her side. She



## CAPTAIN LUCY IN FRANCE

did not hear the words the nurse shouted, but she heard Captain Jourdin speaking hastily to Bob. "—— to get back to the squadron before the fire grows hotter—no time to lose—we shall be needed if the German lines are stiffening before the town ——" These fragments caught her ear. She understood, too, that Bob was in greater danger if he delayed, and that was enough to make her forget everything else. She put her arms about his neck again and said a brief good-bye, hoping the shake in her voice was drowned by the cannon.

The next moment Bob was seated in his plane, leaning down to her for a final leave-taking. A mechanic from the town stood ready by the propeller. Captain Jourdin was in his own machine, and now he turned to Lucy, raising his hand in a farewell gesture that seemed to speak his own dauntless courage. In another moment he was off down the meadow like a skimming bird. Bob's last words were quickly spoken.

"Give lots of love to Father—and Cousin Henry. You'll go back to England to-morrow?" he shouted. Lucy had not even had time to tell him Mr. Leslie was not there. He nodded to the man at the propeller, then turned to Lucy once more. "Do you know whom I saw in Château-Plessis a month ago—might—here—still!" The roaring propeller drowned his words.



## *A GLIMPSE OF BOB*

“Bob—what?” begged Lucy, straining her ears as she leaped back from the machine, but Bob could not hear her either. She saw his lips move, though not a sound came from them. But he thought she understood and with a last nod and smile which he tried hard to make cheerful, for that lonely little figure standing there brought an aching pang to his heart, he pressed forward his control stick and sped off down the field.

Side by side Miss Pearse and Lucy watched the two Nieuports rise into the air over the wood, soaring far above the bursting shells. Then they turned and with one accord ran swiftly toward the town, while the thundering guns shook the earth beneath their feet.



## CHAPTER IV

### THE FORTUNE OF WAR

DAWN was hardly breaking on the morning of May 21st, when Lucy woke from the heavy sleep into which she had fallen early the night before. Nothing—not the crash of the bombardment nor the ceaseless anxiety of her own thoughts—could have kept her awake for long after her head touched the pillow the evening of Bob's visit. Sleep had been stronger than all fears, though now she wondered that it had ever come, for the shock of the battle seemed louder and more terrible as it struck her protesting ears. Miss Pearse and her companion were already up, and Lucy hastily dressed herself, eager to learn what Major Greyson had decided about her departure. Last night the plan had still been unsettled, as it must be while trains and motor trucks had three times their normal work to do. It was a bitter disappointment to give up all hope of seeing her mother, though Major Greyson had told her that the renewed bombardment might last for days and that Mr. Leslie would have



## THE FORTUNE OF WAR

reached Château-Plessis before this, had any sort of undelayed travel been possible.

She was swayed by alternate hopes and fears as she brushed her hair in the half-darkness, and felt about on the little table for her comb and ribbons. It was so desperately hard to think at all with that unearthly noise dazing her brain, but in spite of her tormenting uncertainty she clung steadfastly to one consoling thought. She had helped to bring her father out of danger. Her journey had not been in vain, however hopeless her longing to do more than stand weakly by watching the struggle in which Bob and the rest fought so gallantly. She knew she could help—even here on the battle-front. Last year it seemed impossible that she could do anything toward winning Bob's freedom, and yet did she not have a hand in sending Mr. Leslie on that long, hard journey? Lucy had not much conceit in her nature, but she did have a good deal of her brother's confident energy, and, her courage once firmly grasped, she could persevere in a cause on which her heart was set, like a true soldier's daughter.

"I'm ready, Miss Pearse," she called presently, waking from her serious thoughts as the nurse came to her door.

They went in silence down the stairs into the street, for this morning Miss Pearse did not try any



## CAPTAIN LUCY IN FRANCE

of her usual kind and encouraging means of bolstering up Lucy's cheerfulness. She was strangely silent and preoccupied. In the street a hurrying throng of soldiers, women and children were passing by, dim shadows in the first light of the dawn. Lucy wondered at their numbers as she made her way among them, her eyes turning with a fearful fascination toward the east, where the light of bursting shells outshone the pale streaks of day. The hospital was the scene of a great though orderly confusion. Almost a hundred wounded men had been brought in during the night, and every spare foot of space had been used to lay down a mattress or to unfold a narrow army cot. Doctors, orderlies and nurses were moving in every direction about the crowded halls, and Lucy stole away with painfully beating heart, and found refuge in her father's little room.

A nurse was sitting there, with her arms upon the window-sill, staring out into the shadowy street. She turned pale cheeks and troubled eyes toward Lucy, and her faint smile had nothing cheerful in it as she rose and offered her a chair by her father's side. Lucy felt a pang of fear at sight of that tired face. The nurse looked as though she had kept an anxious watch, and Lucy turned searching eyes upon her father, fearing a change for the worse.

"He's doing well," the nurse said in her ear,



## THE FORTUNE OF WAR

guessing her thoughts, and she accompanied the words with a little encouraging nod, though the color did not come back to her pale cheeks, nor the apprehension leave her eyes.

Lucy sat down at her father's side, wondering greatly, and the nurse went out. Colonel Gordon was just beginning to wake, but for a few moments more he lingered in a doze. At last he opened his eyes and looked at Lucy with a slow understanding smile of recognition.

"You, little daughter?" he asked, reaching out a hand. "What time is it, anyway? It's not light yet. What are you doing here?" Then as the full force of the guns smote upon his ears and brain he started up on his pillows, saying with quick earnestness, "You're going to-day, eh—Lucy? They've arranged it? Greyson promised me. Henry's not back?"

"I don't know yet," Lucy answered, bending over him to be heard. "I haven't seen Major Greyson, he's so busy, but I think he's going to send me off some time to-day." Just then it was real happiness to hear her father's voice so full of energy and purpose—so nearly like his old confident self. She smiled and forgot her worries for a moment. In all Colonel Gordon's eager interest of the evening before at the news of Bob's visit he had seemed tired and restless, but this morning even



## *CAPTAIN LUCY IN FRANCE*

Lucy's unskilled eyes could see a real improvement. She began to tell him about Bob once more.

"If you could only have watched him yesterday morning in the air, Father! You've seen him fly though, of course. They were so wonderful, he and Captain Jourdin, keeping after those big German planes until they drove them home. He looks well, I think." She checked herself and added truthfully, "But he's thinner than he was." She did not tell her father of the anxiety Bob had undergone in his behalf. She wanted to describe his surprise at their meeting, but the effort needed to talk was terrific. It was like speaking in a never-ending peal of thunder.

Soon Colonel Gordon's nurse came back and told Lucy that breakfast was ready. It was daylight now in the wards, where the workers still passed from one patient to the next, along the rows of cots and mattresses. Lucy glanced down the long room with a little shuddering tremor of pity and horror, not daring to look too closely at those silent bandaged figures. But in the depths of her heart the longing still persisted, first roused months ago at that little nursing class on Governor's Island, to do something to help from the stores of her own health and energy.

She went on into the nurses' rest and dining-room and, finding no one yet at the table, stood by one



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of the quaint, narrow windows, from which the glass had been shattered long ago, looking out across the garden into the street. The crowd of people had grown dense in the last hour. Now it was entirely made up of townspeople; women, old men and children, who seemed to-day to have forgotten their orderly routine and to be hurrying blindly through the streets with baskets on their arms and bundles on their shoulders. The children clung to their mothers' skirts with looks of fear and bewilderment. In the few minutes that Lucy stood there not a person passed by going toward the eastern side of Château-Plessis. They were fleeing from the battle-front toward the other end of the town, where already the transport lines were overloaded until not a horse or mule was to be had for miles around. As she watched a deadly fear crept over Lucy's heart. She tried to stifle it, but could not. Her eyes did not deceive her, and had not Miss Pearse's face two hours ago first stirred her to uneasiness? She went to the door of the room, wondering why the nurses did not come, and caught sight of Major Greyson and another medical officer talking earnestly together. They were forced to speak so loud that the words came plainly to her ears, as uncertainly she started forward.

"It's impossible, Major!" exclaimed the younger man. "She can't go now. She's better off here



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than lost in that raging torrent of humanity behind the town. We may be ——”

A shell that seemed to burst over the hospital itself drowned his last words, and Lucy could not hear Major Greyson's reply as the two moved off together. Her heart had begun to pound with terror, and she longed desperately to follow Major Greyson and find out the worst. But the wards were a place of battle now, where the workers strained every nerve to do what their small number could for the growing hundreds of wounded men. She could not enter it yet, and hastily deciding to go back to her father, who was often alone in these crowded hours, she dropped down on a chair for a moment until she could calm her frightened breathing. She buried her face in her hands, and while she sat there, running steps came up behind her and Miss Pearse fell on her knees beside the chair and caught hold of Lucy's hands. The young nurse's cheeks were deadly pale, but her brave, honest blue eyes met Lucy's frankly. She took the terrified girl by the shoulders and spoke close to her ear.

“They said for me to tell you, but you'll need all your courage, so don't you let it go. Oh, Lucy, Lucy! The French and Americans are far outnumbered! They are retreating on both sides of us, and Château-Plessis will soon be inside the Ger-



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man lines." In spite of all her self-control her voice trembled and broke, and for a second she hid her face on Lucy's shoulder, while the two clung together.

Too dazed to realize at that moment the extent of the catastrophe, Lucy tried to put her whirling thoughts together and make this awful thing seem real. "The Germans will take Château-Plessis," she told herself, and still the words had little meaning for her. She felt that somewhere she had stopped living and begun to dream, but just where was the question. Only Miss Pearse's face recalled her a little—that brave, young face with lips tight closed to hide their trembling and undaunted purpose in her clear eyes.

"It began with a new push against our lines at Argenton," Lucy heard her saying. "They've given countless lives to take it, but now they are there we have to fall back to straighten out our line. It was all in an hour of the early morning,—the turning-point of the battle. Our reserves were held up somewhere, and the Germans brought two divisions for every one of ours into the fight." She stopped, breathless, and Lucy, beginning to understand, asked suddenly:

"All those people running by; can they get away?"

"Not unless they walk for miles—there is no



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other chance. Major Greyson is nearly wild because you have not gone. Of course there was no question of evacuating the hospital—we have to stay.”

“And I have to stay,” said Lucy slowly, but Miss Pearse did not hear the words.

“Your father does not know,” she continued. “They have given him something to make him sleep, and he is comfortable.” A sob rose unchecked in Lucy’s throat, but in a moment Miss Pearse had drawn her to her feet, saying earnestly, “Whatever happens, we must look ahead and hope, or we shall have no courage left. They will leave us in the hospital, you know. We shall be safe enough here.”

*Safe* sounded a strange word to use, Lucy thought, as she walked dully toward the table.

She tried her best, in spite of that numbing paralysis of fear, to capture something of Miss Pearse’s calm and steadfast bravery, but that hurried breakfast and the whole morning after it seemed no more than a great waking nightmare. The other nurses had joined them for a few hasty mouthfuls, every one with that desperate struggle between fear and courage written upon her tired face. For it is harder to be brave when one is spent with weariness, and none of the nurses had slept more than three or four hours out of



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the twenty-four since the opening of the second attack.

When Lucy was left alone again she sat on the window-ledge, staring at the ever-changing scene outside. Big motor-lorries, loaded with stores and equipment, were making their difficult way through the streets now. Perched on top of the loads were men hanging on somehow, for the convalescent patients who were at all able to stand a journey had begged or stolen transportation for a few miles toward the rear, whence they could strike another blow instead of falling into the enemy's hands. Along with these came the crowd of civilian refugees, weighed down with the shabby household furnishings that meant too much to them to leave behind, just as their homes had meant so much that they had clung there in desperate hope until escape became all but impossible. The straggling lines looked sadly unable to cover the long, hard miles that lay between them and any refuge. Lucy's eyes grew blurred with tears of pity as, forgetting her own overpowering fear and dread, she watched a heavily-burdened woman shuffle past, carrying her baby as well as bulky bundles of clothes and bedding. After her toddled two other children, one of them no more than able to walk, stumbling helplessly among the heaps of stone.

"Oh, how dreadful—how terrible!" cried Lucy,



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burying her face in her trembling hands with a quick sob. Then she thought, "This is war. I never knew what it was until now."

In another hour fragments of the retreating French and American regiments passed through the town. Field artillery, too, whose wheels and galloping horses were almost unheard in the fire of the German guns. But the greater part of the troops which had so stubbornly held the trenches in front of the wood retreated around the edge of the town to their prepared defenses in the rear, preferring to abandon Château-Plessis at once than to submit the two hospitals to a prolonged bombardment.

Toward noon the noise of the guns seemed to Lucy's aching ears to have grown intolerable. Too restless to sit still, she visited her father's room and found him peacefully asleep. She was glad of it, and yet she longed so desperately for the comfort of his companionship. Where were her mother and Cousin Henry? As for Bob, she dared not think of him. She went toward the door leading out into the little garden. The street was filled with dust, but the lines of fleeing people had passed on out of sight. She stepped onto the threshold and as she did so an orderly, opening a box of Red Cross dressings close by, let fall his tools and caught her arm in an iron grip.



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"No, Miss! Not another step!" he shouted.

Lucy stared at the American's hot, tired face, as he bent toward her to be heard in the uproar. He was a Hospital Corps man whom she had spoken with often in the past few days. Now, in excuse for his rough handling, he beckoned her to look quickly through the doorway. As she did so the explosion of a German shell threw up a great heap of stones and earth not two hundred feet away, across the square.

"They've got our range," he said, close to her ear. "But this old building's pretty solid. It will stand some hammering." His voice was steady as ever and Lucy looked at him with respect and admiration in her frightened eyes, longing for his courage. But he had faced the enemy before. He had told her of service on Filipino and Mexican battle-fields.

Would there be fighting in the streets, in which the Germans would be victorious? Lucy had seen fighting once in the streets of a village in the island of Jolo. But then the enemy had been Filipino savages, quickly overpowered by the soldiers, and she had been too little to do more than cling to her mother's skirts in wonder. As she turned back toward the street another shell struck a house close to the hospital, leaving a huge, gaping hole in the brick wall when the smoke and dust cleared away.



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Still she stood frozen to the spot, her heart beating in great throbs, helplessly waiting for she knew not what. Presently Major Greyson's hand was laid on her trembling arm and he was saying:

“Come away from here, Lucy. Come into your father's room.”

It was the only spot free from hurrying workers making their difficult way among beds too close together. Even here cots had been brought in and made ready for two more wounded officers. Colonel Gordon still slept on, unconscious of the day's calamity, and Lucy breathed a quivering sigh of misery as her eyes rested on his peaceful face. Major Greyson led her to the window and pointed toward the sky above the square. “It's almost over,” he said. “These last shots are only for bravado. Don't you notice the slackening of the fire?”

In the sky the clouds of dust and smoke were clearing, and Lucy did distinguish a lessening in the terrific wave of sound. Its quality had changed, too. As the German infantry engaged the retreating troops, rifle and machine-gun fire was mingled with the bursting shells. In another few minutes the bombardment had sunk to single explosions at irregular intervals. Even at that awful moment the relief to her ears seemed almost like peace.

“Our batteries in the wood have been withdrawn



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to the new line, or silenced," Major Greyson went on. "The Germans will stop firing until their airmen get the range again." He took Lucy's hand in his and held it in a strong clasp. "We'll just have to bear up, Lucy, shan't we? I have no fear for your courage. You've got the good American stuff in you—the sort that never fails. We'll show them their new enemy is worthy of their steel." His eyes flashed in his haggard and anxious face as he searched the street with watchful gaze. "We'll do well enough here, you know. They'll want us to look after their own wounded. With any luck in the counter-attack our troops will recover the town."

At these words a great flood of hope swept back to Lucy's heart. The Germans could not hold Château-Plessis! Then she *would* be brave. For only a few days she could face it as Bob would do.

Suddenly she felt Major Greyson's hand leave hers to steal about her shoulders, as though warning her to summon all her strength of will. She looked through the broken window and that arm about her shoulder tightened. Up the street were advancing a squad of mounted officers, gray-clad figures with helmets like no others in the world. Behind them came a company of infantry. The noise of the guns had died down almost to silence. Lucy's throat began to choke her until she pressed



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one cold hand against it, struggling for breath. Her eyes could not bear to look upon that hateful sight, and still she could not force herself to turn away. On they came, another company behind the first and still another. She was looking at the Kaiser's soldiers, servants of the man who was the author of all this horror—who had made the world into a battle-field. These were a part of Germany's army, of the greedy power which had roused even peaceful America at last in furious self-defense. It had torn apart the Gordons' happy home, sent Bob to prison and to hourly peril, and brought her father close to death.

Lucy did not put these flying thoughts in words. They passed through her mind in half-formed images of trembling dread and bitter indignation. From the hopeless conflict of her brain a despairing sigh escaped her lips, and Major Greyson's eyes left the advancing troops to look at her.

"Come, Lucy, be a soldier," he begged, pity shining in his eyes at sight of her white face, struggling for composure, beneath the childish mop of fair hair. Then as she turned her wide hazel eyes, filled with a desperate resolution, upon him, he said with stubborn confidence, "This isn't the end of things, you know, Lucy. This is only the dark hour before the dawn."



## CHAPTER V

### THE ENGLISH PRISONER

As Major Greyson spoke, both he and Lucy turned again by a common impulse to the street, where the German mounted officers had advanced as far as the square in front of the hospital. Lucy looked at them more calmly now and for the first time saw ranks of stretcher-bearers and motor ambulances following in the wake of the companies. The men, too, who at her first terrified glance had seemed only pitiless visitors, were not formed into the full strength of companies. They marched in column of fours, but the columns were short and straggling ones. The men's step was slow and heavy, their gray uniforms thickly covered with mud and dust and more than one bandaged arm or head showed among them. They crossed the broken pavement of the square with the springless tread of utter weariness, no light of triumph in their faces as they came to a halt in front of the old town hall of the recaptured town.

"Huh! Pretty well done for!" ejaculated



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Major Greyson, a kind of exultation in his voice as he stepped back from his place by the window. "Not much of the conquering hero left just now! I must go to the officer in charge, Lucy. We are likely to have a hundred or so of German wounded quartered on us."

With a last reassuring pat on her shoulder he left the room, and Lucy stayed alone by the window. In a moment the nurse stole in behind her and, after a glance at Colonel Gordon, joined her in a silent, fascinated watch for the next move of the invaders. Two officers had dismounted and gone up the hospital steps. The other four wheeled about and rode across the square in the direction of the Mayor's office and the French hospital. Not a human being except themselves was to be seen about the place. The remaining townspeople did not come out to act as audience to the German entrance. Perhaps the conquerors were just as well pleased that few eyes saw the second half of the column. The soldiers of the depleted companies at a second order now sprang forward and began helping to unload the motor-lorries packed with wounded, and to assist the stretcher-bearers to carry their burdens into the hospital. Some of the ambulances had turned across the square toward the other hospital, but long before Lucy stopped counting the wounded men the nurse beside her had



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hurried away to bear her part in the tremendous task.

For a few minutes more Lucy stood there, but she was no longer watching without purpose. Her fear and horror she had resolutely fought down, not down for good, but under her control. She saw now clearly the hard, inevitable facts that Château-Plessis was in German hands, that the price of safety for the people in the hospital—for her father and the other wounded soldiers of the Allies—lay in caring for the enemy's wounded, and that the task was very great. She was here in the midst of it, and here she must stay. She was strong and able to help, and in hard work she saw her only chance for any peace of mind. With a determination firmly taken she turned from the window and, dropping down beside her father's cot, laid her face for a moment against his hand. He stirred a little, as though about to wake, but she rose cautiously from beside him and with a last look, as though for courage, at that brave soldier's quiet face, went out into the wards.

The hospital was filled with German soldiers carrying in their wounded, while the American staff did all in their limited power to bring order out of the confusion. Lucy took but one timid glance among them. She caught sight of Miss Pearse on one side of the hall kneeling by a mattress



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to unfold a blanket. Her face was flushed and weary, and her eyes bright with troubled emotion, but at Lucy's approach she looked up at her to say. "What is it, Lucy? What can I do?"

Lucy dropped down beside her and spoke quickly, knowing how little time could be spared to listen. "That's what I came to ask you. What can I do? May I help in the wards? You *must* let me do something. I'm strong and can stand a lot. Don't say you won't. I can do more than you think."

Miss Pearse smiled faintly at the eager rush of words. "Of course I shan't refuse," she answered, and her eyes met Lucy's with a silent tribute to that battle for courage she had fought and won. "You can't work in the wards—at least not now. But there are, oh, so many things to do. Come with me to the steward's room."

In after days, when Lucy had time to think it over, she dated from that hour the change in herself from a mere bewildered onlooker at the mighty struggle to a real sharer instead in the work that must be done. With that little part assigned to her she began dimly to understand the secret of the calm determined courage of those about her. They had their task to do, and nothing must turn them from it.

This work went on, uninterrupted, while the Germans took possession of the town. Not a very



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imposing possession with an almost decimated battalion of which the survivors had been hammered into exhaustion by the dogged French and American resistance. But their presence, nevertheless, meant everything of the bitter humiliation and helplessness of surrender to Château-Plessis. The hospital was now under German control, dependent on whatever supplies the conquerors accorded them, in fact, beneath the German heel. Just now, however, the hospital was as much a German as an Allied refuge. The major in command of the battalion assigned three German surgeons and a dozen orderlies to help in the enormous labor of caring for the five hundred patients crowded into the old town hall.

Early that afternoon Lucy started out under German orders on her first duty. In company with a French convalescent soldier, who carried two empty baskets like the one slung across her own shoulder, she left the hospital armed with permits from the German senior surgeon. She had faced the new chief, a big, gray-whiskered Boche with red face and bristling eyebrows, and had obtained his kind permission to walk two miles in the sun in search of dairy supplies to feed the German wounded. But if food for the enemy were not forthcoming the Allies' wounded would be the first to suffer, so the two willing helpers, the little Amer-



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ican and the poilu, he still pale and limping as he walked, did not linger on their errand. Beyond the square their way led through the desolate and deserted streets where the bombardment had been heaviest. This was the part of Château-Plessis from which the inhabitants had earliest fled, and not a human being was in sight, not even a pilfering German soldier, for the place had been in the German hands before, and they well knew there was little worth stealing left in it.

Lucy's heart beat hard and painfully as she neared once more the broad meadows beyond the outskirts of the town. How short a time it was since she had gone free and unmolested to that field to give Bob joyful welcome. She had thought it hard that day to bear the ceaseless roar of the artillery in her ears, yet then she had been on Allied ground, safe in the power of those she loved and trusted, while now — She glanced up at the wounded poilu beside her and suddenly felt ashamed. He was breathing quickly as he limped along, for it was not a week since he had left his bed. Yet he had begged to do this little bit to help his comrades. She was so well and strong, surely she ought to be as brave as he. Just then he broke into her thoughts.

“Look, Mademoiselle,” he said, stopping to take breath as he pointed on ahead. “There is the



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Boche patrol. They'll want our papers when we pass, so get 'em ready."

At the corner of the last street before the lanes began, a little house remained almost undamaged. Before it paced a German sentry, and over the gabled roof the red, white and black flag hung lifeless in the warm, still air. Lucy hastily drew out the papers from her blouse, for the sentry, at sight of the pedestrians, stopped his march and stood in the narrow street to bar the way. Inside the open door of the house a half dozen gray-clad figures sat or stood, and one of them strolled to the doorway on hearing the sentry's challenge. He was a short, burly captain of infantry, with keen, bright eyes and stiff, upstanding hair, his uniform, though lately brushed, still dirty and mud-stained after the desperate encounter of the past three days. He glanced down at Lucy with a look of surprise as he held out his hand for the papers which the sentry ran to present him. She kept her eyes on the ground, fearful lest some of her thoughts might show in her too expressive face, while the officer looked over the surgeon's permits for Lucy Gordon, American non-combatant, and Jean Brêlet, French prisoner of war, to pass freely for the good of the German Hospital Corps. After a moment he gave a short nod and handed them back to the sentry. But as Lucy, with a deep sigh of relief, snatched



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the papers from the sentry's hand and was starting on again, she was stopped by an imperious gesture from the doorway. A second officer had joined the first and while speaking he nodded his head inquiringly toward Lucy and her companion. The infantry captain motioned the two to approach the steps, and addressing the poilu, who had obeyed the summons with obvious reluctance, asked him in slow, labored French, "Do you speak any German?"

Brêlet shook his head with emphasis. "Not the least bit in the world!" he said exultantly.

The German gave him a quick, contemptuous look, and forbearing to continue his questions, turned to Lucy. "Sprechen Sie Deutsch, Fräulein?" he asked, with a shade more of civility in his masterful tone.

Lucy longed with all her heart to answer as the poilu had done. At that moment she bitterly repented of the once pleasant hours spent in the company of Elizabeth, a German servant at Governor's Island, when she had learned something of the language Bob refused to bother with. In her uncertainty and confusion she stammered out the truth, "A little."

The German gave a nod of approval, the irritation fading from his arrogant face. Without a word or glance vouchsafed to Brêlet he motioned



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Lucy to come into the house. Most unwillingly she obeyed, with a backward imploring glance at her companion, which had the effect of making the good fellow start boldly forward to accompany her, only to be thrust back into the street by the watchful sentry. With beating heart and knees that shook with apprehension, Lucy mounted the few steps that led into the principal room of the old house. The officers within made way for her with slight bows, and from the rear a Feldwebel, or Sergeant, brought a chair which he placed beside the table near the centre of the room. The captain signed to Lucy to sit down, and, taking a seat across the table from her, said at once, "You are American, Fräulein. What are you doing here?"

Lucy's momentary fright and weakness had swiftly given way to a great burst of hatred and indignation at finding herself subject to the commands of these triumphant enemies. She was too angry to be afraid, and it was in a confident and defiant voice that she returned, "If you wish me to understand, you will have to speak more slowly."

The German glanced up at her with an air of surprise, a faint smile at the corners of his mouth, but he only said, "Very well. Did you understand my question?"

"Yes," Lucy answered, looking across at him



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with steady eyes. "I came here to see my father, who is badly wounded. I was going back to England when the town was taken."

The officer nodded without comment, then, turning to the sergeant beside him, he ordered, "Bring in the prisoner."

The junior officers in the room had taken seats about the table, with much clumping of boots and rattling of swords. The sergeant opened a door at the back of the room and, entering it, returned almost at once, preceded by a tall young fellow in the khaki of the British army. He was covered with dirt and dust, even his face was stained with mud and the grime of powder, through which his blue eyes shone oddly out, above his lean, sunburned cheeks. He looked desperately weary, almost done for, but he squared his shoulders and crossed the room with a firm step. Lucy bit her lip until it bled to force back the tears of sympathy that rushed to her eyes. The young officer was not more than twenty years old; and how terribly like Bob he seemed, with that close-cropped brown hair, and the still boyish curve about his lips. Just as Bob must have appeared when he too, tired and despairing, faced his German captors without a friendly face to look upon. She met the young Englishman's weary but undaunted gaze with such a look of eager friendliness that he stopped short, and for a second



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the cold defiance left his face, and astonishment, confusion and a kind of welcoming light played over it. But it was hardly a moment. Room was made for him to stand before the table, and the German captain once more addressed Lucy, only this time with a frown of annoyance.

"As you know, few English or Americans speak German." He paused as though this fact was strange enough to ponder over, then continued, "As it happens, we do not any of us speak English. For that reason, we have need of you."

Lucy had already guessed that she was to act as interpreter, and this knowledge had relieved her vague fears of detention or imprisonment. But now her thoughts began to whirl again. Did she know enough German to fulfil her task to her captor's satisfaction? More troubling still, would she be asked to put questions which the young Englishman would not answer? At this her heart leaped with a sudden confidence. If there was any game of wits to be played, she thought that she and this boy with the brave blue eyes and steady lips would be more than a match for their pompous questioner. To make sure of her powers she asked the captain suddenly in English, "Shall I translate for you?"

He stared frowningly at her, understanding not a word, nor did any signs of intelligence appear on



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the others' faces. One little fair-haired lieutenant exclaimed, "Ach! English," as though making a discovery, but could get no further, and the captain with a mutter of annoyance said sharply:

"Speak German, Fräulein."

With a faint excuse for her forgetfulness, Lucy repeated the question, to which the captain nodded agreement, adding still more sharply, "Do your best, and keep your wits alert. The more he tells us, the better for him—you understand?"

As Lucy nodded in silence he commenced at once: "Ask him his name."

The question being translated, the Englishman answered, "Archibald Beattie, Captain, Royal Infantry."

"Ask him what Army Corps he belongs to."

After a second's hesitation, the prisoner answered, "The eighteenth."

"What division?"

"The second."

"Be careful!" said the German sharply. "Tell him that division was moved toward Château-Thierry day before yesterday, and he was taken last night, before Argenton."

The Englishman shrugged his shoulders. "That is my division," he said calmly. "They must have gone down to Château-Thierry without me."

The German gave his prisoner an ill-natured



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glance when this was translated. "What regiment?" he persisted.

"The fifth."

This time Lucy repeated the number with something like a cold chill down her back. The fifth regiment of the second division had passed with others through Château-Plessis three days ago, on its way south. She knew now what she had really never doubted, that the young Britisher was feeding false information into the brain of his questioner, and trusting to the Germans' very imperfect knowledge of the disposition of the Allied troops at this point to make his bluff pass muster. And it had evidently done so in the case of the distant division he had joined on such short notice. The captain was not well enough informed to contradict him with much assurance. Bob had been right, Lucy thought with triumph. The Allied airplanes had kept the enemy from observing the troops' movements. With the same ascendancy in men, he had said,—with something even approaching equality in numbers, not a foot of ground would have been captured.

"How long was your regiment at Argenton?"

While Lucy translated the Englishman's answers, she could not reflect, for to translate the English into German was all she could manage. She spoke German far from well, though some terms



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much alike in the two languages, such as "corps," "regiment," "company," helped her a little. But when she put the English questions to the prisoner, and in the pauses while the German captain pondered frowningly over his next words, she thought out and decided on her scheme.

Her chance came with a long question. "How was it that the British and American troops south of Argenton retired westward after their artillery?"

As Lucy translated this into rapid English, she looked hard at the prisoner, and, without pausing, added the words, "*Where are they sending you?*"

The Englishman did not change countenance as he answered, "The artillery had to move. Cannon are valuable. We stayed where we were posted until the guns were safe. *No further than this. The old prison outside the town.*"

Trembling with joy at her success, Lucy translated the first half of the reply.

The German received it with a sneering smile, demanding promptly, "How many prisoners do you claim were taken by your regiment?"

To this inquiry Lucy added, "*Are you certain?*"

The Englishman answered, "About five thousand in three days' fighting. *Some French prisoners told me so. What are you doing here?*"



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He was trying her own game, anxious, she could see, to account for her presence in this place.

Burning with eagerness to offer a few words of hope or comfort to the brave young officer, who brought Bob's face so vividly before her, as well as to satisfy his own curiosity in her behalf, Lucy turned expectantly for the next question. But the German captain, with the gesture of a man who feels that he is wasting his time, rose noisily from his seat at the table. He gave a keen, unfriendly look at his prisoner, as though he would like to have compelled his confidence, but perhaps his keenness told him that not all the German army could accomplish that. The four juniors had sprung to their feet beside him, and he waved a hand toward Lucy, saying shortly:

"That will do, Fräulein."

Lucy turned for one farewell glance at her ally, left in the enemy's hands. His face lighted up for a second also, as though her sympathy had not been wasted. With relief, too, she guessed that she was quite free to leave. Then she was in the sunny street again, and patient Brêlet, greeting her with a look of thankful joy, limped forward eagerly, saying:

"*Mon Dieu, Mademoiselle!* I don't know what I thought waiting here! I would have gone for help, but where is help, when the Boches are on



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top?" He wiped his hot face, shouldering the baskets once more, while Lucy hurried him on, explaining in her difficult French:

"It's all right, Brêlet. They only wished me to speak German." She breathed a deep sigh of relief, looking up toward the blue sky and the soft green leaves of the poplar grove before them. "I'll tell you about it, Brêlet, but first let's hurry to get the eggs from old Mère Breton. That's her cottage, isn't it, beyond the trees?"

The long afternoon was almost over when Lucy's tired feet once more climbed the steps of the hospital. Her arms ached with the weight of her basket of eggs and vegetables, and her head, too, with the heat of the sun and the throb of anxious thoughts. With a blank depression stealing over her, she made her way among the crowd of never-resting workers and found herself at last by her father's room. Miss Pearse was just coming out, and at sight of Lucy her face awakened to a glad relief as she exclaimed, "Oh, thank Heaven, you're back! I couldn't think what had happened, you were gone so long. Were you all right?"

"Yes, I'll tell you about it later," said Lucy briefly. "How is Father?"

"He has been awake all the afternoon and asking for you. He doesn't know yet that the Germans have the town. In another day it won't hurt him



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to hear it—he's getting well so fast. Don't let him guess it to-night, though, Lucy. He thinks you are going back to England to-morrow. He has fallen asleep just now, but go in and sit by him. He'll wake again before long."

Lucy nodded, looking at the young nurse's tired face. "What an awful day you've had, Miss Pearse! Oh, I'm going to help more to-morrow."

"We have a few women now, of those left in the town, to help us, so we are better off than we expected," was the still cheerful answer. "And you have helped, Lucy. Some one would have had to take that long walk if you hadn't been here."

Lucy smiled faintly, not convinced that she had done much, and went softly into her father's room. His cot was sheltered by a screen since morning, for the beds of two other officers, British and American, had been made room for in the little space. More than anything in the world, Lucy longed now to find her father awake and filled with all his old strength of purpose. She wanted to tell him the whole dreadful story of the town's capture and to ask what the chances really were that the Allies would get it back again. She wanted to hear him share her grief and anger, and lay down the law of hope and courage with unshaken resolution. She needed him to stand by her in spirit, that she might lean on his strength of mind, in spite of his weak-



## *CAPTAIN LUCY IN FRANCE*

ness of body. But she could not have her wish. He had fallen asleep, ignorant of her desperate need. Overcome at last with the weight of a long day's crushing anxiety, the lonely little girl dropped down beside the cot and buried her hot face in her father's pillow.

Presently she heard footsteps approaching, but indifferent to everything she did not move. Then some one knelt down on the floor behind her, and two arms stole gently about her trembling shoulders. For a moment Lucy could not believe she really heard the familiar voice that, filled with the tenderest affection, cried softly in her ear, "Miss Lucy! Dear Miss Lucy! Is it so I see you again at last?"



## CHAPTER VI

### A GERMAN ALLY

“ELIZABETH!” Lucy’s lips could hardly frame the word, as with bewildered gaze she stared into the face so close to hers.

There were the same bright dark eyes, filled with shrewd kindliness, and the smiling, patient mouth. Lucy seized hold of the hands that held her shoulders to make sure she was not dreaming, and the touch of Elizabeth’s thin work-roughened fingers made her presence real. The strangeness of their meeting was for that moment quite forgotten. Lucy felt nothing but an overwhelming relief and joy as her kind old nurse’s arms once more went around her. She was no longer alone with her sad thoughts in the gloomy twilight. Elizabeth, who had loved her and shared her worries for ten years back, who had said good-bye to Bob with tears that day on Governor’s Island, was here to help and comfort her. Lucy forgot Karl’s treachery,<sup>1</sup> remembering only that Elizabeth had saved Bob from her husband’s hands. How often had both Lucy

<sup>1</sup> See “Captain Lucy and Lieutenant Bob.”



## CAPTAIN LUCY IN FRANCE

and her mother longed to tell her of their gratitude! She leaned against Elizabeth's kind shoulder and shed a few tears of weariness and joy, giving way to her feelings for a brief comforting moment. Then she sat up and wiped her eyes.

"How did you get here, Elizabeth? Oh, if things go on happening this way I won't be surprised at anything!"

"Many days have I been here, Miss Lucy," Elizabeth answered, as she too wiped away tears of quiet rejoicing. "Since the Germans hold the town before, was I here, but only to-day have I come to ask if I may help in the hospital."

"And, Karl—where is he?" Lucy stammered over the question.

"He is with his regiment, not far off." Lucy thought that Elizabeth hesitated before she added, "I could not follow him, so here I came from Petit-Bois, working with the wounded, when the Germans take Château-Plessis the first time. Already I saw you once, Miss Lucy, the day of the battle—when you watched the airplanes in the square."

In a flash Lucy remembered the face among the crowd, and the eyes she had fancied were watching her. "That was it! I saw you, too, Elizabeth. At least I felt sure that some one was looking at me. Why didn't you let me see you?"



## *A GERMAN ALLY*

“I thought better not, Miss Lucy. The Germans must keep very quiet while the French and Americans were here.” Elizabeth’s voice shook a little as she spoke, and in spite of herself, Lucy felt an unreasoning pity for her as the little German woman went on, “I thought maybe you learn from Mr. Bob that I was here,—but you have not seen him, no? I saw him once, about a month back.”

The words were on Lucy’s lips to tell Elizabeth of Bob’s visit to Château-Plessis the day before the town’s capture, but before they were spoken she checked herself. The trust and affection of nearly ten years’ companionship were not ties lightly cast aside, but now, her first childish delight at Elizabeth’s presence over, a barrier rose between them—strong and impassable. Elizabeth was a German, and the wife of a German soldier. Summoning the prudence she had so nearly forgotten, Lucy kept silent, and pressed her lips close together. The vision of the German officer questioning the young Englishman came before her eyes. What might her unconsidered words mean to Bob?

Elizabeth’s expressive face looked both hurt and downcast at Lucy’s sudden silence, of which the meaning was plain enough. But she made no complaint, and, pointing toward Colonel Gordon’s cot, beside which they sat on the floor, said softly,



## CAPTAIN LUCY IN FRANCE

“Your father wakes now, Miss Lucy. Already have I talked with him to-day.”

“Did you stay with him this afternoon, Elizabeth?” asked Lucy, reaching out to clasp her old nurse’s hand in sudden remorse at her own suspicion. For had not Elizabeth saved Bob’s life?

“Yes,” Elizabeth nodded. “I stay with him a little while.” She rose to her feet, looking toward the cot where the wounded officer had begun to stir in waking. “I leave you with him now,” she said, and with a lingering glance at Lucy from her brown eyes, went quietly out of the room.

Lucy turned eagerly to her father, hardly waiting for him to open his eyes before she exclaimed, “Oh, Father, I’ve seen Elizabeth, and she said she had talked to you! Isn’t it wonderful to find her here?”

Colonel Gordon smiled, settling his big, lean shoulders among the pillows as he gave an understanding nod to his daughter’s quick words. But Lucy had paused suddenly in her outburst of joy over Elizabeth’s presence. She remembered Miss Pearse’s warning, and with a pang of fear lest some unconsidered word escape her, realized that her father was still ignorant of the town’s capture. Unless Elizabeth —— But her father’s first words put her mind at rest on that score.

“I saw her for only a minute after I woke up,”



## *A GERMAN ALLY*

he said, turning on his side with a slight painful effort, to look into Lucy's face. "But that was long enough to thank her for what she did last year. She told me that she had been allowed to help in the hospital, and that she hoped to see you. How she got here I can't imagine, nor why they trust her to work among the wounded—though we both know there couldn't be found a better nurse."

Lucy was silent, afraid to answer, since she could not tell the truth—that Elizabeth was trusted because the hospital was in the hands of her compatriots. Colonel Gordon did not notice her confusion as he continued earnestly:

"I'm very glad she's here—however she came—for your sake, Lucy. She is devoted to you, beyond all doubt, and I won't be quite so uneasy with her here to look after you. Greyson seems almighty slow about getting you off to Calais. I suppose he can't help it. I can imagine what the state of transportation is, but surely you won't have to stay much longer. Of course, if it were possible to get right on, your mother and Henry would have been here long ago."

He paused, breathing a little hard, and frowning, unreconciled, as he silently considered the obstacles to Lucy's departure.

Lucy sat wretchedly silent, knowing the truth to be a hundred times worse than what already greatly



## *CAPTAIN LUCY IN FRANCE*

troubled him. In a moment he found breath to speak again.

“Lucy,” he said thoughtfully, “I said I knew Elizabeth was devoted to you, and so she is. But don’t forget for a moment, however kindly we feel toward her, that her country is our enemy. We have good proof that she would not harm Bob, even at Karl’s command, but that is a personal affection with her. It does not mean she would not harm the Allies’ cause. You must be on the watch lest you speak a word that might be repeated to the enemy’s advantage.”

Lucy murmured her agreement as her father, his emphatic tone changing to one of wonder, said again, “Why they allow her to work here I can’t imagine. I must ask Greyson.”

“You’re tired, Father,” said Lucy, getting up after a moment from the floor beside the cot, as Colonel Gordon lay wearily back after his prolonged talk. Her voice shook a little with threatening tears, for it seemed dreadful to her that he should not know the truth, and that she should help to deceive him, though common sense told her it was wise and necessary. He would certainly sleep more peacefully that night thinking the Allies in possession of the town. But it was a deception which could not be kept up much longer.

She bade him good-night with a brave attempt at



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cheerfulness, and went out into the big ward, which was just dimmed by approaching twilight. Elizabeth was carrying a heavy basket of Red Cross supplies across the hall to the storeroom, and Lucy, without asking permission, ran up to her and seized one of the straw handles, taking half the weight on her own arm. "Go on; I'm going to help," she said briefly. Elizabeth obeyed, glancing back with troubled solicitude at the serious, determined face of the little girl she knew so well, while Lucy, with that familiar figure before her, bringing swift memories of happy days at home, looked down the rows of wounded men and wondered again if this could all be real.

That night, in spite of the welcome silence of the guns, Lucy's natural fear and dread at the strange fate that had befallen her brought wakefulness and feverish dreams. But she was too worn out to lie awake long, and Miss Pearse's footsteps, moving about in the gray dawn, roused her from deep sleep. She struggled at that moment with desperate drowsiness, intensified by the longing to fall back where the bitter truth could be forgotten. But she fought hard against her weakness and, fearful of yielding, sprang out of bed and plunged her face into cold water. Her sleepy eyes blinked stupidly back at her from the shadowy mirror as she vigorously rubbed away the drops, but her resolution was



## *CAPTAIN LUCY IN FRANCE*

triumphant. To-day she meant to work, that by nightfall she might feel the satisfaction of having done what she could to help—the only thing that was worth doing here.

The guns had commenced again with intermittent bursts of firing, but they were not so close now, and the vibration of the air not so terrific. The Allied guns were turned toward Château-Plessis since the capture, and the German batteries had found new emplacement outside the town's western edge; the edge nearest to the railways and the channel. Lucy looked from the window toward the eastern sky, where the clouds were gleaming with a soft, pearly light. There were no bursting shells to mar the sunrise to-day. All was quiet on this side now. She glanced down at the street, along which a dozen German soldiers were strolling. A few shouted words reached her ears, and once more she wished with all her heart she did not understand that language of which every word had grown hateful. Then suddenly she remembered Captain Beattie and the possibility of help to him which that knowledge had put into her hands. It would give her glorious satisfaction to bring the enemy's own tongue to use against them. She had first, though, to learn the whereabouts of the old prison to which he had been taken.

She quickly finished dressing and joined the two



## *A GERMAN ALLY*

nurses, who saw her with surprise and a little protest on Miss Pearse's part against her early rising. She did not scold much though, and seemed glad of the promise of Lucy's help. "I'll give you work to do the minute you are ready for it," she said in answer to Lucy's eager demand, as they crossed the street and climbed the hospital steps under the inspection of the gray-uniformed sentry. "Go in and speak to your father first, and then we'll see."

Lucy entered the little room softly, mindful of the other wounded officers as well as of her father, and found Colonel Gordon awake, with eyes turned toward the door. He looked rested and stronger with the improvement each day now brought, but his lips were firmly set, as Lucy had often seen them when he was thinking out a hard piece of work, and his smile was but a faint one as he greeted her.

"Did you sleep well, Father? Are you all right?" she asked, stammering a little because she hated to remember the unhappy secret between them.

Colonel Gordon's keen, far-seeing eyes studied her flushed and anxious face as he answered quietly, "Yes, I'm all right, little girl. You may drop the camouflage now. I know we've lost the town."

"Oh, Father, who told you? I didn't," cried



## CAPTAIN LUCY IN FRANCE

Lucy, dropping down beside him, a great rush of relief overpowering all her fears. He knew the worst and they could share it together, and he had borne the news with his old, unshakable courage. Lucy thought of what Bob had said more than four years ago at Fort Douglas, when the Mexican rebels rose over night, threatening the border. "Father may get excited if breakfast is late, but when anything is really wrong, he's all right."

"Greyson told me," said Colonel Gordon. "I suppose he thought I should guess it anyhow, when I began asking him about Elizabeth. Funny idea—not letting me know." He spoke with a faint scorn for the ways of the Medical Corps, forgetting, as a man on the road to recovery is apt to do, how ill he had been only a few days before.

"I wondered what in thunder was the matter that they couldn't get you off," he went on. "Poor little daughter—it's pretty tough luck." His face was drawn with anxiety as he reached out a hand and caught hers in a strong clasp, but she broke in eagerly:

"I'm all right, Father! Please don't feel so worried. I'm working in the hospital, and, honestly, you don't know how glad and proud I am—now the scary part is getting better—that I can be of use here."

"It can't be helped," was her father's slow and



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almost unheeding answer. "Greyson tells me the enemy has left the hospital pretty much in our own hands. They are rather too tired to bother us," he said, a flash of satisfaction lighting his face. "I know that much from the action in which I was hit. Their advance is made with a desperately driven force that leaves them limp and done for when it is over. A couple of million Americans will turn the great tide. Long before that time our counter-attack should free the town—but meanwhile, you poor little girl, you're in the German lines."

"I'm quite used to it now!" Lucy insisted, not realizing the absurdity of her words in her longing to reassure her father's keenly suffering mind. "And Elizabeth is here, you know—she will take care of me."

"Yes—how thankful I am for that," said Colonel Gordon quickly.

"Here comes Major Greyson, so I'll leave you," said Lucy, rising from her place as the surgeon entered for his morning visit. "I'll go and get my breakfast."

In the little dining-room she found Elizabeth setting the table with plates and spoons. The sight was such a reminder of breakfast-time on Governor's Island that, forgetting all her repugnance to Elizabeth's German sympathies, she threw her



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arms around her old nurse's thin, little shoulders, and gave her a hug for a morning greeting. Elizabeth turned a delighted face toward her, exclaiming:

"Good-morning, dear Miss Lucy! How early you are up! Come, in this chair sit, and I will get you the best I can."

It seemed very pleasant to sit down and be waited on by Elizabeth's deft fingers, but the strangeness of her being there had not yet passed from Lucy's mind and she said, wistfully, "Oh, Elizabeth, if we were only back at home. Father and Mother and Bob and William and you and I. Wouldn't it be great?"

"That will come again, Miss Lucy," suggested Elizabeth hopefully. But Lucy, unable to say frankly, "Not while there are enough Germans left alive to fight," lifted a spoonful of weak cocoa to her lips in silence.

"And William—how he is?" asked Elizabeth, stopping her work to make the inquiry with eager affection in her eyes.

"He is well, and, thank goodness, safe at home," sighed Lucy, seeing again before her the forlorn, stumbling little children of the refugees from Château-Plessis.

Miss Pearse came in presently and joined her, famished after an hour's hard work. "I have a



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job all ready for you, Lucy," she said, when she had taken a sip of hot coffee and eaten a piece of black bread. "It is a tiresome one, but very necessary."

"I'll do anything," said Lucy quickly.

"Our hospital garments are falling into rags, and no one has any time to mend them. Elizabeth has been helping, but I am going to send her for Mère Breton's supplies this morning while you stay here and sew in her stead."

Miss Pearse had heard all about Lucy's adventure of the day before, and did not wish her sent on the same errand again, until the Germans should have their own interpreters, or officers who spoke the barbarous English tongue. In any case, Elizabeth could serve their purpose. Lucy had also told Miss Pearse of the years the German woman had spent with the Gordon family, and of the never-to-be-forgotten service she had rendered them. Miss Pearse had shown both interest and sympathy, wondering much, like Lucy, at the strange chance of war which had brought these two old friends together, on such hard terms for friendship. Like Colonel Gordon, she warned Lucy repeatedly against speaking unguardedly before her old nurse. "She is the most German person I ever saw," she said with conviction. "She has all their good qualities, so I shouldn't be surprised if she had some



## CAPTAIN LUCY IN FRANCE

of their bad ones. Anyway, you may be sure her husband could make her try to worm out information about the troops. You don't know what trifling little facts they can make use of. Don't answer any questions about what troops were in the town, or anything like that."

"She hasn't asked me any," said Lucy. "She has been here herself since the last German occupation, anyhow. But I'll be careful."

She was thinking over these warnings as she sat, half an hour later, by the narrow windows of the nurses' room, mending long rips and tears in pillowcases and pajamas. Outside the window the German sentry paced the little garden by the budding rose-bushes and crumbling walls, and within the hospital the workers continued their never-ending task. While she meditated, Elizabeth came out from the side door into the garden, carrying two baskets on her arms, and with a nod to the sentry passed quickly out through the ruined gate.

She could have obtained Brêlet's company and assistance, but she had started off alone with her big baskets. Lucy, as she looked after her, thought she guessed why. The little German woman suspected that the poilu would have gone with her most unwillingly.

Outside the gate Elizabeth turned east through the same deserted streets which led toward the



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cottages in the lanes and to the meadows beyond the town. She walked quickly, for the supplies were urgently needed. Besides, she had worked so hard all her life that active occupation had become second nature to her. Bob had once said, "Elizabeth never sits down to rest—only to work more easily that way." She found a path among the broken stone with patient care, for her shoes were old and gave little protection to her feet. Once she stopped to exchange a word with a German sentry during a lull in the firing. When she neared the edge of the town she was challenged by the guard in front of the Headquarters building, but her German tongue and written permission won her ready passage. At the border of the meadow stood a little improvised shack, put up to accommodate a guard and a field telephone, in case of any alarm from this side of the town. In front of it a corporal was idly walking about, stopping to stare at Elizabeth as she hurried by. She called out a good-morning to him, which he answered with the inquiry:

"Where are you going, *Frau*, to fill those big baskets?"

Elizabeth nodded over toward Mère Breton's cottage, hidden behind its little grove of apple and plum trees, of which many were reduced to blackened and leafless trunks. The cottage itself had been twice struck, but the sturdy old Frenchwoman



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refused to abandon it, and in the deadly rain and thunder of bursting shells had gone on cultivating her garden, and coaxing her frightened hens to eat and fatten for the wounded poilus in the hospitals. Now she feared they would nearly all go down German throats, but Lucy had the day before tried her best, in her halting French, to convince Mère Breton that only by feeding the Boches could their own people expect a share.

Elizabeth looked up at the blue, cloud-flecked sky, away from the shattered trees of the wood in front, as she crossed the meadow. Her eyes, always anxious and watchful these days, felt a relief in turning from the scarred earth to the untroubled heavens. But this war is not only on the earth, as she realized with a swift start, when out from behind the clouds darted two flying specks which hung poised above the meadow, the sun just touching their tiny wings. She hurried on, reached Mère Breton's house, and found the old woman in the garden among her cabbages. Elizabeth did not know a word of French, but she held out the hospital baskets with a pleasant nod and smile to cover the deficiency of language. Mère Breton's sharp blue eyes, from beneath her white cap, gave the German woman a look of bitter hostility, quite untouched by the smile, which faded from Elizabeth's lips unanswered. Mère Breton took the baskets,



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trudged off to fill them, and presently returned them in silence. Her thoughts were as plain as though she had spoken. She knew that not an egg nor a fowl would go to her poilus with a Boche for messenger. Elizabeth nodded good-bye without attempting any further friendly advances, and started on her hot walk back, this time weighed down with a heavy load. She looked quickly up at the sky again as she came out from beneath the trees, for the noise of an airplane was now distinctly heard as it circled not more than half a mile above her head. As she stared up, squinting in the sunlight, the machine dived suddenly and flew around the meadow, hardly two hundred yards above the earth.

Elizabeth stood paralyzed between an impulse to drop down upon the grass and another to run for shelter. At the observation post behind her the corporal had rushed inside to the telephone. No batteries were stationed at this point, for the Germans counted on the Allies not caring to drop bombs on Château-Plessis, but a telephone call could bring anti-aircraft guns to bear on intruding planes from the north of the town. While Elizabeth stood frozen to the spot, the airplane above her, as though scorning to recognize the fact that Château-Plessis was in German hands, flew over her so close that she could see the glistening paint



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of the American emblems on its wings and tail, and the pilot, sitting alone in his little monoplane, leaned over the side and looked at her.

Elizabeth let fall her baskets, heedless, she who was always so careful, of the fragile provisions within. The face looking down with eager eyes from a hundred feet above her was Bob Gordon's. He reached toward his feet, and, through the roaring of the propeller, Elizabeth heard a wild shout of warning directed to her from the observation post behind. But no bomb was flung from the plane which had her at its mercy. Instead she was suddenly enveloped in a shower of papers fluttering down toward the grass from the pilot's hand. As she brushed them dazedly from her shoulders, Bob leaned out once more and threw a last paper, only this one was crushed into a ball with a hasty pressure of his fingers. Then the anti-aircraft guns crashed out, and the Nieuport rose like a bird and winged its way toward the sun, dropping another shower of papers as it mounted, which scattered over the green, daisy-starred surface of the field. The balls whistled through the air, but before any accurate shot was possible, the daring little scout had disappeared behind a drifting cloud beyond the reach of fire.

Elizabeth had picked up the ball of paper as soon as it touched the grass. With trembling hands,



## A GERMAN ALLY

while she watched the Nieuport make its swift escape, she smoothed out the wrinkled sheet and held it against the sunlight.

"What's that you have there, *Donnerwetter!*" asked an angry voice behind her, and the corporal, red-faced and panting, looked over her shoulder, then stooped to pick up another of the leaflets.

"Some more of President Wilson's talk," said Elizabeth, still looking with a critical air at the printed sheet before her. "But *Himmel!*" she added, turning to the corporal with an anxious shake of the head. "For a moment I thought I was done for. I did not know what to do!"

"It was no time to stand staring, like a dummy," was the corporal's comment. "Come, *Frau*, help me gather up this trash, and I'll burn it and give the impertinent Yankee that for his pains."

Elizabeth nodded, leaning down to pick up the papers thickly scattered over the grass. Her heart was beating so hard she could hardly conceal her hurried breathing, in spite of her calm and docile exterior as she obeyed the corporal's orders. She gathered up the crumpled sheet together with the others, crumpling them all into a wad before handing them to her companion. She had seen all she wanted in those two or three minutes while she held the paper against the sunlight. The printed leaves were copies in English and German of a part of



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President Wilson's speech made in New York on the 18th of May. But the paragraph that Elizabeth read had been pricked with pinholes before it was dropped at her feet. It was as follows:

There are two duties with which we are face to face. The first duty is to win the war. And the second duty, that goes hand in hand with it, is to win it greatly and worthily, showing the real quality of our power not only, but the real quality of our purpose and of ourselves. Of course, the first duty, the duty that we must keep in the foreground of our thought until it is accomplished, is to win the war. I have heard gentlemen recently say that we must get five million men ready. Why limit it to five million?

Against the glowing sunlight Elizabeth read Bob's message: "I shall try to land to-night."

Back in the hospital Lucy worked hard at the big pile of garments with their long, ragged tears. Her neck ached and her fingers, after two hours, but she kept steadily at it, with the satisfying sense of being one of the hospital workers; of doing, right where the product of her hands was so urgently needed, what she had often done from far away. When the morning was half over Elizabeth came back through the garden, walking slowly with her



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loaded baskets, and presently she came empty-handed into the room where Lucy was.

"Hello, Elizabeth!" exclaimed Lucy, tired of her own thoughts and welcoming her old nurse with a smile. "Are you coming to sew with me? I'd love some one to talk to."

"Yes, for a few minutes I help you," said Elizabeth in a quick, earnest voice that made Lucy look up at her curiously as she continued. "Because I something have to tell you that no one must hear, so I sit by you and softly speak."

Always when Elizabeth was excited her English grew worse, and now Lucy, astonished at her words and manner, stopped sewing and asked hurriedly, "What is it, Elizabeth? Oh, tell me quickly—there's nobody to hear."

Not convinced of this, Elizabeth gave a sharp glance outside the open door and, taking a torn garment on her lap, drew her chair close to Lucy's by the window before she answered. "I have Mr. Bob seen, and he gave me a message."

"Bob!" gasped Lucy, her terrified eyes devouring Elizabeth's face. "Oh, what is he doing here!"

"He is not here now," said Elizabeth quickly. "He has got safe away." With her needle poised between her fingers while she forgot all pretense of sewing, she told Lucy in a voice just above a whisper of her morning's adventure.



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Lucy heard her in stupefied silence, only her glowing cheeks and shining eyes giving sign of her overpowering excitement. Other feelings, too, beside joy at this news of her brother, showed in her face. A puzzled wonder was strongest, with the realization of her old nurse's German sympathies. When Elizabeth came to the part of her story where Bob contrived to drop his message and she to decipher it, Lucy could contain herself no longer.

"But how did you *know* there was a message hidden there? How could Bob know you would find it?" she burst out, speaking but a part of her confused thoughts aloud.

For answer Elizabeth first looked earnestly into her face, as though she read clearly what Lucy would not say—that she wondered greatly at Bob's trust in her—then putting down her needle clasped her thin hands anxiously together. "Miss Lucy," she said a little shakily, "I hope you believe me, because I nothing tell you but the truth. Did I not tell you I saw Mr. Bob here a month ago, when the Allies take the town? At that time we talk, and Mr. Bob explain to me a way that he could a message send, if he needs. He have the charge to let fall those papers—you know—with speeches of the president, over the German lines. He show me how with a pin he could a message make that no one would see, if they had no thought for it. When



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he said this he spoke of war news only—of course he not think then that you be left here if the Germans take the town.”

“But, Elizabeth,” Lucy stammered, more at sea than ever, “he arranged a cipher with *you*? He spoke to you of war news?”

“Yes,” Elizabeth nodded. “I know what you would say, Miss Lucy. You wonder that he tell me, but it was first me who tell him something.” Elizabeth’s dark eyes were filled with pain and sorrow as she looked into Lucy’s face and whispered, “No longer do I wish for Germany to win.”

Never in ten long years had Lucy doubted Elizabeth’s word, but now a wretched fear shot through her. Did she dare trust blindly to Karl’s wife? But even while she hesitated, the kind, steady, honest gaze of those dark eyes swept her last doubts away. With impetuous remorse and thanksgiving she reached out her hands and clasped Elizabeth’s closely, while her tongue struggled for words to express her new-born joy and confidence.

“Oh, Elizabeth, I’m glad! I’m so glad!” was all she said, but her face spoke for her, and Elizabeth’s anxious eyes shone with relief and friendliness.

“You believe me, dear Miss Lucy—you know I speak truth?” she asked eagerly. Then at Lucy’s swift assent she continued earnestly, “I tell you



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*all* the truth, and then you see I do not deceive you. Miss Lucy, I do not love France or England, or even America better than my Fatherland. Germany I love, and always will I love her. Only, Miss Lucy, now is no longer with us the dear country I before knew."

A look of horror flashed into her kind face as she said heavily:

"I have things seen that never could I tell you of. At first I believe my countrymen who say the English prisoners are guilty of crimes—for I never any Englishmen knew. I think perhaps they deserve the deadly punishment. But when America send her soldiers against us ——" Elizabeth's voice trembled. "When Mr. Bob so nearly was given up to death; when they tell me lies of how the Americans, they are worse than any—I believe them not! Too long was I in America to be so fooled, and now I know it is a cruel war that has brought her against us. For those men who have put the world on fire, who have made to die those many innocent children—oh, Miss Lucy, better they are beat and conquered by America, and so may God let the old Germany live again!"

The little German woman's low, cautious voice shook with earnestness. Her clasped hands opened and closed in quick, restless gestures so unlike quiet, steady Elizabeth that Lucy's heart beat with pity



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and understanding. In Elizabeth's simple nature love of country was very strong, and her disillusionment, at returning to war-time Germany, very bitter. Yet she still found courage to hope for better things. Lucy marveled at her patient faith, but she could not at all put her thoughts into words, nor indeed find thoughts that would not hurt more than console, so after a look of warm affection she sat silent. But in a moment curiosity prompted her to ask:

"How about Karl, Elizabeth? Does he know how you feel?"

A shadow settled once more on Elizabeth's face, but she answered quietly, "Karl is very angry with me, Miss Lucy; but it is not that he knows I would help the Allies now."

"Then why is he angry?" But even as Lucy asked the question she knew the answer. "Is it because of Bob?" she faltered, and, seeing she had guessed, Elizabeth nodded.

"Somehow, Karl find out that it is my fault Mr. Bob was not taken as a spy. Not yet will he forgive it, but I not think he feel so always; and still if he need me I go to him."

"Where is he now?" asked Lucy, thinking how little Karl deserved such faithfulness and ashamed that she had ever wondered at Bob's trusting Elizabeth so entirely.



## CAPTAIN LUCY IN FRANCE

“He is in Brussels—cook in a hospital. He is safe, Miss Lucy. I not think I could work to help America to win if Karl was in the trenches.”

Lucy had no sympathy for this feeling, but she dimly understood it.

Another desire had grown stronger than all else in her mind now; the wish to make sure of reaching Bob's rendezvous. The great meadows behind the town were his only possible landing-place, but they were more than a mile away, and sentries were on guard all night in the town.

“Oh, Elizabeth, how shall we ever manage to get there to-night?” she questioned, in a torment of anxiety.

Elizabeth gave her a funny little smile—half-ashamed and yet resolute. “You have forgot, Miss Lucy, that I am a German. Almost where I like can I go, since the town is taken.”



## CHAPTER VII

### BOB GORDON AND CAPTAIN BEATTIE

ABOUT nightfall of the same day Lucy left the hospital and crossed the street to return to her bedroom. Miss Pearse had urged her to go early to bed, though the truth was she did not feel so tired after a long afternoon spent in helping unpack supplies, as she had done on the days when she sat unoccupied, waiting for she knew not what. She picked her way among the broken paving-stones slowly, burdened with many thoughts. She had not told Miss Pearse a word about Bob's coming, nor of her own and Elizabeth's intention. It was not that she was unwilling to confide in her kind friend, but that she dreaded to face Miss Pearse's doubts and fears, weighed down as she was with plenty of her own. It seemed much easier to go, as Elizabeth had planned, without causing anxiety or alarm to any one. For, however difficult the way and severe the trial to her courage, Lucy knew that the chance of seeing Bob, and of hearing news of himself and of their mother, was enough to overcome all her fears.



## CAPTAIN LUCY IN FRANCE

She lay down, dressed as she was, on her bed and promptly fell asleep, for she had been up since five o'clock that morning. She set Miss Pearse's alarm clock before lying down and put it beside her pillow in case she should sleep too long, but after an hour a prolonged burst of firing roused her. She sat up and looked at the clock, but it was too dark to see anything. She found some matches, and striking a light, discovered that it was nine o'clock, just time for the alarm. Miss Pearse did not come off duty till eleven. With fast beating heart Lucy threw around her shoulders a little cape which she often wore on summer evenings, for the night had grown damp and chilly. Breathing a fervent prayer for the success of her expedition and for her brother's safety, she left the room, and closing her door, that Miss Pearse might think her asleep when she came in, stole softly to the stairs and down into the street.

It was a starlit night, and the figure of the sentry, patrolling the square in front of the hospital, showed clearly, his bayonet touched with a faint gleam as he shifted his gun on his shoulder. The handful of French townspeople were all indoors, none of them being allowed by the Germans on the streets after eight o'clock, unless on hospital duty. But an occasional soldier passed by, with clumping boots or clinking spurs, while Lucy stood hidden



## BOB AND CAPTAIN BEATTIE

in the doorway. The lights of the hospital windows twinkled now and then, as a hurrying figure passed in front of them. A bat whizzed close by Lucy's ear. She felt so lonely at that moment that she welcomed the sound of its blundering wings. It was a nice French bat, she thought, bent on some peaceful errand. But she had not much longer to wait. In a moment quick, light footsteps sounded near her, and Elizabeth's little figure took shape out of the darkness.

"Here I am, Elizabeth!" Lucy whispered.

Elizabeth stepped inside the door, reaching out to touch Lucy's arm, as she caught her breath after her rapid walk.

"Then right away we start," she said, panting a little. "So soon as we get there, the better."

"Do you think we can do it? Shan't we be stopped?" asked Lucy fearfully.

"The most they can do is to send us back," Elizabeth answered. "But I think we get by all right. My room in the house of my friend is close to the town's edge. That far I go every night. And of the soldiers who are here on guard I many know. Last autumn was this regiment in Petit-Bois. Often have I seen that big sergeant now working at the hospital, when I help in my nephew's shop."

While Elizabeth talked in a quick, nervous undertone, she had drawn Lucy from the doorway and



## CAPTAIN LUCY IN FRANCE

the two were making their way along the gloomy street. Nothing more than an occasional lantern lighted the captured town when the lights of the few occupied houses were put out, and passers-by were left to find their way by the starlight, or by the occasional bursting of a star-shell in the heavens.

"Oh, I wish the guns would not start again!" sighed Lucy, when a new burst of explosions had shaken the air.

"No, Miss Lucy, it is better so," Elizabeth objected. "With the guns firing no one hears Mr. Bob's machine."

"Of course!" Lucy exclaimed, suddenly welcoming the vibrations of the cannon against her ears. "Why didn't I think of that! Oh, Elizabeth, I can't bear to think of the risk he runs. I wish he were not coming."

"Be sure he comes not unless a good chance he has," Elizabeth reassured her. "He said only 'I shall try.'"

They had covered half a mile, through streets leading to the town's outskirts by a more southerly direction than the way Lucy had taken the day before. Now, at the corner of a street that remained quite undamaged, a sentry stood out from the shadow of the wall. Elizabeth gave a sharp glance at his tall, thin figure, and, as they drew nearer and





“WHO’S THAT WITH YOU?”







## BOB AND CAPTAIN BEATTIE

the man brought his gun to the challenge, she called out in German:

“Well, Hans Eberhardt, don’t you know me yet? You’re younger than I am, and should have better eyes.”

The soldier lowered his piece and said with a laugh, “It was your footsteps I was going to challenge, Frau Müller. I couldn’t see you in this murk.” Then, as the two approached him, he added, “But who’s that with you?”

“Just a little girl who helps in the hospital. I’m going to take her home to sleep.”

Lucy, trying to follow the rapid German speech, felt her heart pound at these words. But the sentry offered no objection, inquiring sleepily of Elizabeth as she paused close by him, “Isn’t it eleven o’clock yet, Frau? I must have been on guard here almost a week.”

“It is nearly ten—you’ll soon get off,” said Elizabeth encouragingly. “What sort of quarters have you here?”

“Pretty good. Better than those at Petit-Bois, though the French guns haven’t left us many whole roofs to sleep under. And, Donnerwetter! We need a little sleep.” He gave a weary sigh as Elizabeth, starting on again at Lucy’s side, said with a friendly nod:

“Well, good-night to you, Hans.”



## CAPTAIN LUCY IN FRANCE

“Good-night,” said the sentry, shouldering his gun once more.

Lucy held fast to Elizabeth’s arm in an ecstasy of relief as they walked quickly on through the starlit darkness.

“No others shall we meet inside the town,” Elizabeth said softly. “Once outside we must be careful, and on the lookout keep.”

They were already near the border of Château-Plessis, but not among the lanes with which Lucy was familiar. They had come further south, making an abrupt turn, after passing the sentry, away from the real route to Elizabeth’s lodgings. She wished to give the German headquarters on this side of the town a wide berth, as well as the field observation post in the meadow. Bob’s probable landing-place she and Lucy had discussed that morning, for Lucy had faith in Elizabeth’s shrewd judgment, sharpened by months of experience on or near the battle line.

“Mr. Bob dares not to land now where three days ago you saw him, Miss Lucy,” Elizabeth said with certainty. “Nor yet near the place where he let fall to me the message. But there is a further meadow where sometimes aviators have the landing made, and that is on the other side of the old Frenchwoman’s house, and nearer to the wood. It is there I look for him to come.”



## BOB AND CAPTAIN BEATTIE

Now, as they passed the scattered houses between them and the open fields, Lucy guessed that they would come out about a quarter of a mile south of Mère Breton's cottage. Already she saw the safety of the way Elizabeth had chosen, for this corner of Château-Plessis was the farthest removed from the German front and the least frequented. The fields it bordered on were too near the wood where the French batteries had been hidden to have been tilled or cultivated. They lay neglected, torn up by shell holes and overgrown with weeds.

The stars gave light enough to show the outline of Mère Breton's cottage among the trees at their left as they emerged at last from a poplar-bordered lane into the grass of the nearest meadow. Lucy stumbled a little as her feet met the rough clods of earth, and Elizabeth, breathing fast after her anxious walk, said softly in her ear, "We can sit down and rest a while, Miss Lucy. Too early is it yet for him to come."

"Where shall we go?" asked Lucy uncertainly. "Near to the cottage, I think. Then we shall be safely hidden and can see around us."

Elizabeth nodded, cautiously choosing her steps in the darkness, fearful of the treacherous shell holes here and there. At Mère Breton's back gate they paused, and Lucy held her breath, listening with a shiver of fear for she knew not what. But



## *CAPTAIN LUCY IN FRANCE*

only the pounding of the cannon as the bombardment fitfully continued broke the silence, while far to the west on the battle line beyond the town, bursting shells threw a glaring light against the sky.

Through the soft darkness near at hand a cricket by the gate-post made a brave effort to chirp against the guns. Lucy and Elizabeth sat down on the worn stone steps outside the gate and peered across the fields and up at the sky in anxious expectancy.

"He may not come, Elizabeth. I almost hope he doesn't!" Lucy said again, the old dreadful fear for Bob clutching at her heart. Inside the gate and drooping above it grew a big lilac bush, and as they sat there, the night air shook the blossoms and floated over them laden with fragrance. Lucy leaned back against the post and drank in the sweet air in deep refreshing breaths. Never again, she thought, would she smell lilacs without remembering this night.

After a long time of waiting she felt certain it must be late enough for Bob to come. Out of many thoughts an idea had occurred to her, as she sat gazing up into the sky. The most dangerous part of the descent would be when Bob drew near enough to be seen against the stars. Once in the black shadow of the wood he could land unseen, and Bob knew these meadows well and would make use of such protection. This meant that he would land



## BOB AND CAPTAIN BEATTIE

at some distance from where they were, and she wanted to be as near as possible, to save every precious minute. She waited a moment for a good pause in the firing to tell her thoughts more easily to Elizabeth, but before it came a sound made her suddenly clutch at her companion's arm. In the distance, between the scattering shots, she heard the whir of an airplane. Silently Elizabeth nodded, pointing upward toward the sky above the wood. A little dark speck showed for an instant against the clear, starry blue, then before Lucy's eager eyes had more than caught it, sank swiftly down among the shadowy tree tops.

Lucy sprang to her feet, not speaking a word, all her energy and breath reserved for that mad dash across the fields to Bob's landing-place. But Elizabeth's hand caught hers and her voice entreated:

"Don't run in the dark across there, Miss Lucy! Surely you will in the holes fall. Mr. Bob will come this way himself to look for us."

Only a little deterred by this warning, Lucy began running toward the wood, searching every yard of ground ahead of her and narrowly avoiding more than once a bad fall into a yawning shell hole close at hand. Elizabeth was soon lost sight of but she could not stop to wait. Before long her breath began to come hard and fast, and her back to ache unbearably from leaning forward as she ran to



## CAPTAIN LUCY IN FRANCE

watch for dangerous ground. On she went until presently a wide field lay between her and Mère Breton's cottage. A hummock in the grass at one side made her dodge a little to the left, uncertainly. It looked like an animal asleep, but as she came closer it moved and up beside her sprang a tall figure. Two strong arms were around her trembling shoulders, while a familiar voice said quickly in her ear, "It's Bob, Lucy dear—I'm not a Boche! That's what I took you for!"

"Oh, Bob—if I had been!" Lucy gasped as she caught tight hold of him and glanced shivering into the darkness.

"Don't worry—he wouldn't have got me. I shan't fall tamely into their hands a second time." Suddenly his fingers on Lucy's arm stiffened. "Who's that?"

"It's Elizabeth. I ran ahead of her. Where shall we go, Bob? Won't you be safer close by your machine?"

"We're near enough. I can see all around me here. Elizabeth can tell me where the guards are posted. I bet she knows them all. Oh, Lucy," and here Bob's momentary cheerfulness collapsed with a dismal groan, "I never thought this could happen—that you should be left here! They beat us back with six full divisions. Jerusalem!—how many men they must have lost, for we gave them a



## BOB AND CAPTAIN BEATTIE

good fight, though we were outnumbered three to one."

"Don't mind, Bob—we can't help it, and I'm all right. Before long we'll surely get the town again."

"That's what we hope for. Is Father doing well? He must have been nearly wild when he knew you couldn't get away."

"Yes, but you know how calm he is when things are really wrong. He's better, in spite of everything."

"I'm thankful for that. Here's Elizabeth." Bob took a few steps forward and caught hold of the little German woman's arm, as she came panting up to them. "You're a brick, Elizabeth," he said with eager earnestness. "I was so afraid you wouldn't get the message or understand it—but I might have known you would. I've hung over these meadows looking for you again and again since the town was taken."

"Oh, yes, Mr. Bob, I understand the message all right," nodded Elizabeth, breathing fast. "It was just like you showed me. And you are well—you don't get hurt?" she asked, the same affectionate anxiety in her voice as when she watched over Lucy's welfare.

"I'm as fine as a fiddle. Look here, Elizabeth, where's the nearest outpost?"



## CAPTAIN LUCY IN FRANCE

"More than half a mile from here, Mr. Bob. Pretty safe you are here, and I a good watch will keep while you say all you want to the little sister."

"Bob, I'm so frightened for you," said Lucy, trembling afresh when any pause in the firing made the little night noises audible around them. "Why did you come?"

"Because I had to see you and know that you were safe. Father, too. You can imagine how Mother and Cousin Henry have felt since Château-Plessis was taken."

"Oh, Bob, you've seen Mother? Where is she?" Lucy cried, in a burst of relief and longing.

"She is near our line, about fifteen miles southwest of here. That's where the trains were blocked—except those carrying troops—so that she couldn't get on. She tried every possible way—horse, mule and ambulance—and she would have made it on foot if the town had held out another day. Come, let's sit down on this bank. And stop shaking like that! I'm all right."

They dropped down beneath a ragged row of poplars which separated the field from its neighbor as Bob continued:

"I was so thankful to have the good news of Father's recovery for her at the same time that she heard of the town's capture. Now I can at least tell her something of you. You're in the hospital,



## BOB AND CAPTAIN BEATTIE

Lucy? Do the Germans let us run it as before? I know something of what goes on in Château-Plessis—can't stop now to tell you how—but I know that the town is held by only a company, and that the enemy is too fagged out to do more than care for their own wounded."

"Make us care for them, you mean," said Lucy. "But where can you get news from? Never mind now, tell me more of Mother. Oh, how often I've thought of her, and longed to tell her I was safe!"

"It's Elizabeth being here with you that has comforted her most. Did you find Elizabeth that day I told you she might still be here?"

"The day you landed over there on the meadow? You never told me," said Lucy, puzzled. Suddenly a light broke through her mind. "Was that what you tried to tell me as you started off? I couldn't hear a word with the propeller whirling."

Bob put his arm suddenly about her in the darkness and looked up into the starry sky. "If only I could take you back with me," he groaned. "It seems too awful to leave you here! But I have to cross the German lines, and their guns and scouts are fiendishly watchful. My little one-man Nieuport can skim over their heads and dodge them. With a two-seater I need a fellow in front of me pumping a machine gun for all he's worth." He fell silent for a despairing moment, then said more



## *CAPTAIN LUCY IN FRANCE*

calmly, "Never mind, Lucy. Just be a plucky sport. I won't leave you here long, if I have to bring a squadron after you. If only we could force them out of Argenton! That's the place where they threaten to outflank us if we advance."

At the name Argenton Lucy all at once forgot the sickening fear and ache of her own heart in a vivid recollection. That was the place where Captain Beattie had been taken. "What makes it so hard to get through there, Bob?" she asked eagerly. "You mean the enemy is too strong?"

"Not that—they don't need a large force. There's a long fortified ridge in front of the town that keeps us from approaching. It's a piece of rolling ground about three miles long. Their trenches run through it, and they have a collection of anti-aircraft guns and battle-planes. We hang over the place day in and out, but we can't fly low enough to get sight of their batteries."

"Would any one who had been in their trenches know what you want to learn?" asked Lucy, peering into her brother's face through the darkness.

"Of course—if he wasn't blind. But people who have reached their trenches from our side haven't come back to tell us. Look here, Lucy, what I want more than anything to know is this: Do you get enough to eat? If you don't, I can



## *BOB AND CAPTAIN BEATTIE*

manage to bring over supplies on nights when things look quiet, and leave them in the wood."

"Oh, no, Bob; please!" Lucy entreated. "The hospital has a garden and the place is so packed with German wounded that we get all there is to be had. I know the danger you run to come here, and I don't want you to try it again, much as I long to see you." As Bob sat in troubled, helpless silence for the moment, she added quickly, "But if I should learn anything that might help the Allies to retake the town, how could I get news to you?"

"What could you learn, you foolish kid? There's nothing about this town we don't know. And for heaven's sake don't put your finger into such a risky business. Keep out of anything like spying, and be satisfied to help where it is safe. Elizabeth might not get you out of trouble as she did me."

"Do you know of a place called the Old Prison somewhere in Château-Plessis?" asked Lucy irrelevantly.

"Yes; it's about a mile from here. It's nothing but an old jail the French used as a sort of town office, keeping one or two cells for an occasional prisoner. We let out some French soldiers the Germans had stuck there, when we took the town. Why, have they any one in there now?"

"Yes, I heard of some one being put there," said Lucy briefly. "I think I remember the place



## CAPTAIN LUCY IN FRANCE

now. Bob," she added anxiously, "don't you think you'd better go? It seems as though the firing were much heavier. I'll be so horribly worried about your getting back."

"Please don't be. I'll keep way over their heads and play safe. How I wish I could leave you and Father some good news; but I can't, except to promise you that Château-Plessis won't stay in German hands one second after we can take it."

Lucy choked down a sob and, thankful that the darkness hid her eyes brimming with tears of lonely wretchedness, threw her arms about Bob's neck in a desperate embrace.

"Give Mother my dearest love," she said huskily in his ear. "Tell her I'm safe, and please go now. Good-bye!"

"Good-bye, Elizabeth," said Bob, having a hard time with his own unsteady voice. "Take care of her, won't you? And whenever you cross that field keep a lookout for me."

"Yes, Mr. Bob," assented Elizabeth, patting the tall young aviator on the shoulder with a loving hand. "Tell your mother she should not too much worry over Miss Lucy. I do my best for her."

"I know you will," said Bob, with some relief in his heavy anxiety. "Good-bye, Captain."

Another moment and he was swallowed up in the shadows, while Lucy and Elizabeth stood gazing



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after him with straining eyes, their ears on the alert for every sound, though nothing could be heard around them just then in the noise of the cannon.

Still silent and motionless they stood there after Bob had gone with eyes lifted now to the sky above the wood. Within a quarter of an hour the little Nieuport rose like a winged speck over the tree tops. Lucy clutched Elizabeth's arm, her heart pounding intolerably. "There he is! There he is!" she whispered, her mind hovering between relief that Bob had got safely away from German territory and dread of what he had still to face. Another second and the little monoplane had disappeared in the blue, and Elizabeth was tugging at Lucy's arm and saying earnestly in her ear:

"Come, Miss Lucy! We should go back quickly now!"

Lucy turned away from the wide starry spaces on which her eyes were still fixed, and, obedient to Elizabeth's urging, began to retrace her steps across the fields behind her old nurse's cautious feet. She walked mechanically, her eyes on possible shell holes, but her mind far distant. Lucy's moments of fear and weakness had one redeeming feature. They were usually followed by a great scorn of herself in which her courage and endurance rose to a high pitch. So it was with her now, after the despairing terror which had made her hold fast to



## CAPTAIN LUCY IN FRANCE

Bob, and forget half she had to say to him at the moment of parting. At sight of him flying back through the night to make his perilous way among the swarming German planes above the trenches, all her courage returned to her. She could do nothing toward Bob's safety, but while he was in danger she would do the one thing in her power which might be of some distant help to the Allies.

"Elizabeth," she said, as together they made a difficult way through a tangle of bushes near Mère Breton's cottage, "I'm going back by way of the Old Prison."

"But why, Miss Lucy? For what?" Elizabeth demanded in amazement, stopping short to catch her breath.

As quickly as she could, Lucy told her of the encounter of two days ago with the young Englishman, and of her hopes that he might have some of the information Bob so sorely needed. Elizabeth listened with no answering enthusiasm for the risky project, but the vigorous objections which she launched when Lucy paused in her rapid explanation fell on deaf ears.

"You needn't come with me. I can find the place, and there are so few sentries I know I can keep out of their way," was the only answer vouchsafed her. In her impulsive resolution Lucy forgot Elizabeth's larger share in the dangers of the



## BOB AND CAPTAIN BEATTIE

expedition. She had only one thought just then; to succeed in her undertaking. And this required such a desperate keying up of her own courage as to make her thoughtless for her kind and unselfish companion.

“ Oh, Miss Lucy, I beg you not to go! ” implored Elizabeth in a last attempt to dissuade the determined girl from her purpose.

To this Lucy returned doggedly, “ It’s all I can do for Bob, and I must do it.”

Elizabeth sighed despondently, but her faithful affection answered without hesitation on her own account, “ Very well; if you must, I go with you.”

“ Oh, thank you, dear Elizabeth! I knew you’d help me,” cried Lucy with genuine relief and gratitude. “ Now come into Mère Breton’s garden till I show you what I’m going to do.”

Along with Lucy’s mad eagerness to learn from Captain Beattie’s lips what he knew of the defenses of Argenton—information which Bob himself had told her might free Château-Plessis from German hands—was another and more womanly motive for her visit to the prison. The sight of her brother had reminded her of the young prisoner who had so aroused her admiration and pity. She could not help Bob to safety, but could she not do something for this other boy, now that chance had brought her within possible reach of him? She thought to her-



## *CAPTAIN LUCY IN FRANCE*

self how she would despise an English girl who could have seen Bob taken off to prison, as she had seen Captain Beattie, without lifting a finger to ease his unhappy fate. Somewhere this young officer's family was waiting anxiously for news of him, and hoping that one kind hand might be stretched out to offer him help and comfort. While she thought this Lucy had entered Mère Breton's garden and, feeling for Elizabeth in the shadowy darkness, said softly, "Gather some of whatever you can find. I know where the eggs are put after they are collected in the evening. I'm going for some."

The little hen-house was not far off, where the basket of eggs was nightly placed inside the door. Lucy felt for the key upon the roof, unlocked the door and putting in her hand, took out half a dozen eggs and tied them in her handkerchief. She felt no compunction about making off with the old Frenchwoman's property. She and Mère Breton had talked together in confidence and Lucy knew that this food was far better destined in her eyes than if it had gone down the throats of the German wounded. She hurried back across the garden and found Elizabeth collecting a small supply of the only ripe vegetables to be had just then.

"Got them?" she asked, breathing hard with uncontrollable excitement. "All right, come on."



## BOB AND CAPTAIN BEATTIE

They stole out of the gate into the meadow, and now Elizabeth, trying to resign herself to the attempt since she could not prevent it, asked anxiously:

“What shall we do there, Miss Lucy? Better we think of that now, while there is time.”

“Well, first, how far from here is the prison?” Lucy hoped it was no farther than Bob had said. She knew her courage would not last forever.

“Only a little way after we reach the town. I know the shortest way. But always a guard there is, when in daylight I have passed the place. No good it will do there that I am German, Miss Lucy, for I have not any excuse to make him for us.”

Lucy thought for a minute. “I don’t believe there are many guards, do you, Elizabeth?”

“No, only one, I think.”

“Because Bob said there were cells on just one side. If I can only get to his window and talk with him for five minutes it will be enough. It doesn’t seem as though they would watch the prisoners all the time.”

“No, more likely they very little watch; but, oh, Miss Lucy, I am not sure how it will be, and I wish you do not go!”

“I must try, Elizabeth. Be nice and just think how to help the most instead of worrying. I know we will be all right.”



## CAPTAIN LUCY IN FRANCE

“Very well. I help you all I can,” agreed Elizabeth with quiet resignation. She spoke not another word of protest as, entering the silent, abandoned streets, they stole cautiously along the town’s outskirts, toward the south.

After a few moments’ walk, Elizabeth pointed to an open square ahead, at one corner of which a low building gloomed against the sky. A church, with the steeple shot away, rose opposite it. “There is the prison,” Elizabeth said in Lucy’s ear. “The cells are on the other side.” Now that they were near to danger Elizabeth seemed once more to take command of things. “Miss Lucy, you must here in the shadow stay,” she continued quickly, “while I go to see who is on guard. Better I some excuse can make alone, if he should see me.”

Without waiting for an answer she was gone, and Lucy shrank close against the brick wall of the house behind her, and stood there with suddenly quaking heart, and ears listening vainly for any other sound than the occasional bursts of shell fire. In five minutes Elizabeth was back again, and the moment she spoke Lucy felt the joyful relief in her voice.

“Oh, Miss Lucy,” she said, softly, “the best of luck we have! The guard inside the house sits—where was the office. They are a couple of sleepy fellows, leaning on their guns. I watch the door



## *BOB AND CAPTAIN BEATTIE*

while you in back to the barred windows go. So soon as the guard should move I come to warn you. So in the dark we safely get away."

"Elizabeth, you're a brick!" Lucy whispered, squeezing her companion's hand in eager gratitude, as she followed her toward the dark wall of the old building.

A square of light showed on the side toward the church, and here Elizabeth took up her watch from the shadow of the corner, leaving Lucy, carrying the little spoils of Mère Breton's garden in her cloak, to make her way to the right, or prison end of the building. With a hard clutch at her already waning courage, Lucy felt with her free hand for the angle of the corner on the rough stone wall, and stepping cautiously around it, reached the side of the prison which opened on a narrow courtyard.

She stared up at the wall, seeing no break at first in its dim outline, but, as she looked, three windows detached themselves faintly from the shadows. In another moment she could see that each was criss-crossed with bars. Only one course of action suggested itself to her excited mind, and whatever its drawbacks she dared not delay. She went close up to the first window and, dropping her cape, stood on tiptoe and put her face against the bars. She could see nothing inside the room but, making a trumpet of her hands, she said, "Captain Beattie!"



## CAPTAIN LUCY IN FRANCE

She dared not call out, for as luck would have it, in the last five minutes there had come a decided pause in the firing, and a loud voice might very well carry between the shots. The occupant of the cell made no response, only Lucy fancied that she heard some one sigh, and the rustle of a straw mattress beneath a sleeper's weight. With pounding heart she stood a minute longer listening, then stepping back, crept on to the next window. She reached up on tiptoe to grasp the bars, and as she did so her fingers touched something soft inside—somebody's clothing. At the same moment a voice, speaking within a few inches of her face, asked breathlessly in English, "Who's that?"

Lucy's heart gave a wild throb of triumph. "Captain Beattie?" she stammered, clutching at the bars.

"Yes—who on earth——?" The voice was shaky with bewilderment. Lucy knew she had not a second to lose. She said hastily:

"You remember the girl who translated the German questions for you, the day the town was taken? I'm an American; my father is an officer—wounded—and I came to see him from England and couldn't get away in time."

"But what are you doing here now?" asked the amazed young Englishman. As he spoke, his hand reached through the bars for Lucy's, as though to



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establish the comradeship of touch out of the darkness.

"I came to see you because I knew you'd be lonely—I had a brother in a German prison—and for another reason too. But first," she reached down for her cape and gathered up the meager supplies it held, "do you get enough to eat?"

"I should say not. But quite as much as I expected. How about yourself?"

"Oh, I'm all right. I'm in the hospital and there is always enough there. Look here, I've brought you a few things. I know raw eggs are horrid, but they're nourishing. It's all I could manage to-night. Do you want them?"

"Do I want them!" The rest of the prisoner's answer was to reach through the bars and take the scanty provisions carefully from Lucy's hands. "You plucky little kid! I'm as hungry as a wolf. Don't tell me you came here all alone to-night?"

"Oh, no. A—a friend from the hospital came with me. But, Captain Beattie, please listen now while I tell you something." She paused for a second and a sudden thought prompted her to preface her words by asking, "Are you quite sure I'm all right and that you trust me? You can put out your hand and feel my hair and face if you like, so you'll see I'm really who I said."

"I believe you!" said the Englishman, and his



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voice sounded as though he were smiling. "What's your name? You haven't told me."

"Lucy Gordon. My brother is Lieutenant Robert Gordon of the American Aviation Corps."

"No! Is he? I've seen him fly." From inside the barred window Lucy heard a deep sigh as though the young prisoner had suddenly realized again his hopeless captivity.

She went on quickly. "He came here to see me to-night."

"What? Here?"

"Yes. He got word to me that he was going to try to land behind the town, and I came out to meet him." She plunged into the story of Bob's coming, repeating all he had told her of the difficulties in the way of the Allied advance, and her own new-found hope, at mention of Argenton, that the young Englishman might have some of the information so vital for the recovery of Château-Plessis and the adjoining ground.

"Oh, if I could only have seen him for one moment! What a chance in a thousand!" her listener broke in with desperate eagerness.

"Then you do know about Argenton? You could have told him?" Lucy panted.

"Didn't I walk all through their trenches and wait for hours in the broiling sun above their beastly batteries? But I had no hope of getting



## BOB AND CAPTAIN BEATTIE

news of it to our lines. If I could have seen Gordon for five minutes!"

"I never thought of it in time. I always do things too late," moaned Lucy, almost in despair. "Couldn't you tell me anyhow, Captain Beattie? So that if he does come again—he's going to try to—I won't fail a second time?" Her voice shook with the sobs that rose uncontrollably in her throat. To have been so near success and to have missed it! A weight of disappointment settled on her heart.

"I couldn't explain the defenses to you now," said Captain Beattie doubtfully. "You wouldn't remember them accurately enough to do any good. Anyhow, it's unlikely that he'll be able to make the trip again."

"Never mind—he might."

"Well, I have paper and pencil, and I'll draw a sketch—a camouflaged one. You could tell him, of course, what it is. But I don't think you ought to come here a second time."

"I'm coming. I'll bring you things to eat. Didn't I tell you Bob had been in a German prison? Anyway, I've made such a mess of this I'm going to try to succeed in the end."

"Don't feel bad," said the young officer, concealing his disappointment. "It would have been a horrible risk to bring your brother here—though so



## CAPTAIN LUCY IN FRANCE

far as I can see the town is empty and deserted as a tomb. I wish you'd go now yourself, though. I'm awfully anxious about you. Where is your friend?"

"She's watching to see that your guard doesn't come out. All right, I'm going; but you'll see me soon again."

"Good-night—God bless you." The young captain reached quickly through the bars and took Lucy's hands in a warm clasp. "You don't know what it's meant to talk English again—and with a friend."

Lucy sprang down from her foothold in the wall, and, with one swift glance about her through the darkness, picked up her cape and stole around the corner of the building. Elizabeth was still standing by the shadow of the wall, but as Lucy came up she reached out and caught her arm, leading the way swiftly down the narrow street.

"Oh, Miss Lucy," she exclaimed, "I thought you never come! I have prayed for you every moment you were gone! The soldiers stay there, but I feel so afraid they change the guard, and I have no time to get to you!"

"I'm sorry. I know I stayed too long—but I found him!" Now that her disappointment was not so sharp, Lucy was glad that at least she had accomplished half her mission. "I'll tell you all



## *BOB AND CAPTAIN BEATTIE*

about it, Elizabeth. Where are we going—to the hospital?”

“No, indeed, Miss Lucy. I take you to my room, and there we can sleep a little while. By four o'clock we will back to the hospital go. So you will get there as soon as the others.”

“All right,” said Lucy faintly. “I don't know whether I'm sleepy or not, but I think we started out to find Bob about a week ago.”



## CHAPTER VIII

### A LITTLE FRENCH HEROINE

"LUCY, will you do something for me?" asked Miss Pearse, as they mounted the hospital steps early in the morning, two days later. "Miss Willis and Brêlet are going to the German supply depot after some things we need. I wish you would go with them and see if you can't bring back more soap and matches. We want them terribly, and we always have to wait for them at a separate door from the food depot. It's impossible to spare any one else from here," she added, turning toward Lucy a decidedly reproachful look, "or I'd keep you working in the hospital. Goodness knows what you'll do, once I let you out."

Lucy, not having any defense ready, said nothing. But she did not look particularly repentant. Miss Pearse had come face to face with her outside the hospital when she returned the morning after Bob's visit. Astonished at catching sight of her charge, whom she thought still in bed and asleep, she had insisted on a complete explanation. Lucy



## *A LITTLE FRENCH HEROINE*

had received a scolding, but underneath all of her severity, Miss Pearse could not hide the sympathetic heart that beat in warm response to Lucy's hope and anxiety. Her lecture had weakly broken down into a fire of questions about Bob's daring flight, which left Lucy feeling less remorseful than Miss Pearse intended.

Now, after waiting a moment while their passes were inspected by a deliberate German sentry, she followed the nurse into the hospital, saying, "Of course I'll go, Miss Pearse. Right after breakfast? Just let me tell Father good-morning first."

Colonel Gordon was sitting up in bed, for his convalescence had now really begun, and his thin face, from which the tan had almost faded, was tinged with the first suggestion of returning health. His eyes, though, held a sombre look in their gray depths, and at sight of Lucy it did not leave them, even when he smiled cheerfully and held out a welcoming hand.

Lucy had told her father everything about Bob's visit and the news that he had brought, and in the thrilling story Colonel Gordon's fear for his son's safety had been almost outweighed by admiration of his pluck and skill. His face had lighted up as he listened, and Lucy had repeated the details of Bob's message and landing twice over. It meant



## *CAPTAIN LUCY IN FRANCE*

much to the wounded officer to feel that, if he himself must remain a helpless prisoner of war, his son at least was doing a brave part alone.

Lucy had not told him a word about her visit to Captain Beattie's prison. She had not accomplished what she hoped, and she dreaded lest her father's fears for her safety might lead him to make her promise not to go there again. Just now she felt she could not give up the one chance that might mean so much. And had she not given a promise, too, that she would do what she could to make the young Englishman's lot more bearable?

This morning she told her father of her intended trip across the town for the supplies doled out by the German conquerors. Colonel Gordon lay watching his daughter with anxious eyes as she sat beside him, thankful to see that her cheeks had not yet lost their color, in spite of all she had endured, nor her hazel eyes their brightness.

"I'm all right, Father, so long as I have work to do," said Lucy, reading his troubled thoughts. "It was sitting idle and worrying that I couldn't stand. Now that you are getting well, and we know the worst about the town, I can grin and bear it."

"A weight is off my mind since I know Bob has told your mother we are safe," said Colonel Gordon. "As for grinning and bearing it, our troops



## *A LITTLE FRENCH HEROINE*

won't be satisfied to do that, thank heaven. They'll push through again somehow—they must! I don't know what I'd do if I thought I was a prisoner for the rest of the war."

Lucy was silent, but again she resolved to tell her father nothing of the secret Captain Beattie held, until she had revisited the prison and accomplished at least a part of what she sought.

"I must go to breakfast now, Father," she said, after a moment. "I'll come in to see you again just as soon as I get back from my morning's work."

Lucy needed no urging to do all in her power to help inside the hospital. To her natural eagerness to be of service to the Allies' cause was added a keen desire to show the Germans in command that she was useful. She had a secret dread that they might think her in the way and forbid her to remain where she longed to stay, close by her father's side.

The streets were glowing in hot sunshine when she started out with Miss Willis and Brêlet, an hour later. Since the night before, the guns had been almost silent, and every soul among the Allies in the town wondered how things were going on the battle-front, but steadfastly refused to ask their conquerors, certain they would hear of nothing else than a German victory. But even the Germans could not claim much of an advance, for the firing



## *CAPTAIN LUCY IN FRANCE*

of the past night showed their line to be still held at about four miles west of Château-Plessis.

The German food supply depot was about a mile north from the American hospital. It was inconveniently placed for both hospitals and for the few hundred inhabitants remaining in the town, but naturally the Germans gave no thought to this. Every one wishing to buy or beg food was obliged to go in person, showing the registry card which had been furnished each inhabitant soon after the town's capture. This systematic arrangement promised well, but in reality many a tired and over-worked French citizen had a long, hot walk to the supply depot for nothing. The food was scanty, and only the worst portions of it were reserved for the townspeople. In addition to this, the long wait necessary to secure anything kept those away who had a few vegetables left growing in their little gardens.

The old men and boys of Château-Plessis had been put to work clearing the streets of broken stone and rubbish, for there was no more than a company of soldiers in the town, and these contented themselves with mounting guard and exercising a general supervision. But the civilian workers received no more food than if they had been idle, and, hungry and dejected, worked grudgingly at their task, fearful lest they should be in some way



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aiding the German advance. Lucy watched these unwilling workers, as the three passed close to a little group of them, on their way across the town. Somehow they seemed even more pitiful to her than soldier prisoners. The soldier has at least had a chance to strike his enemy, and he is at a time of life when blows are given and endured. But these old men, weather-worn and bent with labor, had earned a quiet home in the little town where most of them were born. The boys, from twelve to about sixteen years old, glanced up with shamefaced and defiant looks. They had had no chance at self-defense, and Lucy guessed with a quick throb of sympathy how their young, loyal hearts must suffer in obeying the conqueror's commands.

"Suppose it were America, and the Germans were ordering us to work for them," she thought, and her cheeks flushed with anger at the triumphant foe who caused such misery. Then she shook her head impatiently at herself, as the house used for the food depot came into sight. "I'll have to feel a little more polite than this, if I'm to get any soap and matches out of them," she decided.

"There's not much of a crowd to-day, thank goodness," remarked Miss Willis, looking at the scattered handful of people standing about the building. "But I suppose there are enough more indoors to keep us waiting half the morning."



## *CAPTAIN LUCY IN FRANCE*

“ Well, I’ll go to the other side and try my luck,” said Lucy, making for the left-hand door and taking her place in line, with the written request from the hospital in her hand. Presently her turn came to step inside the door and hand her paper to the sergeant at the desk. He read it, pursing his lips doubtfully, glanced at a written list beside him, and finally told Lucy to come back in half an hour. He shouted it, under the odd impression that people who could not understand German would get his meaning somehow if he spoke loud enough. Lucy nodded, wanting to laugh at his hot, bothered-looking face, and went out in search of Miss Willis and Brêlet.

The people of the hospital, owing in great part to the German wounded sheltered there, were in a much easier position than the rest of the population in regard to food. The German authorities allowed them hand-carts to convey the somewhat variable supplies allotted to them. To-day the chief part of the food had already been sent over, but some necessary things were missing, and these Miss Willis had volunteered to bring back. The chances looked uncertain, however. The German non-com in charge as a matter of course appeared doubtful about granting her request. Perhaps—after a while—— When Lucy entered the room things had advanced no further than this. Seeing



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every prospect of a long wait she glanced about her to see who else was in the same plight. Twenty-five or thirty people were standing wearily waiting on the sergeant's pleasure. Some of them had sat down on the floor and leaned against the wall.

Among these last was a slight delicate-looking woman whom Lucy noticed because she seemed so sadly out of place seated on the dusty floor in the midst of the noisy and perspiring crowd. She was plainly dressed in black with a widow's cap over her soft, dark hair, but something about her face and bearing set her apart from the peasants and townspeople around her. Beside her stood an old woman who was evidently a servant, with an empty basket on her arm and an angry scowl on her forehead as she watched the German soldiers leisurely dealing out supplies to the waiting crowd. But it was the third member of the little group to whom Lucy's attention quickly shifted. This was a girl about her own age, who stood leaning against the wall by her mother's side, a kind of scornful patience on her face. Her blue eyes, which looked as though not long ago they had been full of childish gaiety, now held a defiant resolution in their depths. Her hair was so black it reminded Lucy of Julia Houston's, except that Julia's hair was straight, and this girl's fell in soft waves over her thin shoulders.



## CAPTAIN LUCY IN FRANCE

Lucy could not take her eyes away from that pretty, sensitive face, so pathetic in its look of having been roughly wakened from the happy childhood that French girls know until well into their teens. In another moment the object of her gaze looked around and caught sight of her. Lucy did not hesitate. She had longed for the companionship of a girl her own age since she had found time to think in these last few days, and she had seen this girl once before in crossing the town with Brêlet and Elizabeth, and had heard from Brêlet something of her history. She made a difficult way across the crowded room to her side and, overcoming a sudden shyness as the stranger's eyes met hers, she said in French with a friendly smile, "You won't mind if I speak to you? I'd like so much to have another girl to talk to."

For a second her listener looked puzzled, for Lucy's French was much worse than her German. Then her face lighted comprehendingly, and a bright smile chased away all the scornful sadness from her look.

"I shall be glad!" she exclaimed, her pretty voice sounding pleasantly on Lucy's ears after the shouts of the German soldiers calling off the names upon their lists. Then, hesitating for a second, the girl said in careful, foreign-sounding English, "If you prefer, we can talk in English. I speak enough



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that you can understand me, though I make some mistakes at every moment."

"Oh, yes," cried Lucy, enormously relieved at the loosening of her tongue. "I can understand you perfectly, and you tell me if I talk too fast."

"Then let us sit on the floor," the French girl suggested, dropping down as she spoke against the wall.

Lucy quickly followed suit, and when they were seated side by side on the rickety floor, which shook and creaked under many footsteps, her companion continued, "I know a little of you already. Clemence, our servant, has told me how you came here to see your father." A look of such keen sympathy shone in the blue eyes fixed on hers that Lucy for a moment could not speak, and the French girl added, "You are American, no? Tell me your name."

"Lucy Gordon. And I know part of yours. You are Mademoiselle de la Tour, but what is your first name?"

"Michelle. It was the poilu who was with you when you saw me in the street who has told you that. He knows well this town. He was—how you call it? *Jardinier* of my uncle, very near here, before the war."

Brêlet had in fact told Lucy more of Michelle de la Tour than her name. He had described the first



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German advance early in the war, which had driven the widow and her little daughter from their beautiful country-place to find refuge in the town. Since then things had gone from bad to worse with this family, once so honored and fortunate. Madame de la Tour's only son was fighting for his country, while his mother and sister were left, poor and needy, in German hands.

Lucy wondered what stories of privation and sacrifice Michelle's lips could tell. But she also guessed that she would hear little of them. Impelled by an instinctive confidence and liking which made her feel more warmly toward this girl than five minutes' acquaintance warranted, she began telling her a little of her own history. Of her coming from England, of her father's recovery in the midst of the German advance, of her mother's vain attempts to reach them, and lastly she spoke of Bob. Not, of course, of his visit since the town's capture, for Lucy had learned prudence enough in the last week. She did not say a word that could have brought danger to any friend of the Allies, however unlikely it was that her English would be understood. Michelle heard her with an eager intentness, and Lucy's friendly interest seemed reflected in her listener's eyes, which in their changing brightness expressed her thoughts far better than her halting English. At last she turned to



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where her mother sat, and reached out an eager hand to her.

“*Maman!* I have a friend—a little *Americaine*. *Mees*, here is my mother.”

Lucy crawled over and held out a dusty hand to Madame de la Tour, who gave her in return a firm, lingering clasp of her delicate fingers. Michelle’s mother had her daughter’s radiant smile, and it hid for an instant even the heavy lines of weariness and anxiety in her pale face.

“I am very glad if you will be company to my little girl,” she said, in better English than Michelle’s. At the same time her dark eyes searched Lucy’s face, as though the terrible years of doubt, dread and suspicion had made her slow to accept any friendship, even one so innocent as this little American’s. But Lucy’s frank, honest glance seemed to convince her. She patted her hand and smiled again, as though the ever-lurking dangers were forgotten for the moment in motherly pity for the lonely child before her.

“Michelle,” she said quickly, “you must ask *la petite* to come and visit us. Very sad it must be for her always in the hospital.”

“Will you come, *Mees*?” asked Michelle, eagerly.

“Yes, but please call me Lucy,” was the prompt reply, to which Michelle agreed with a nod and a smile, saying:



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“You, too, call me Michelle. So it is much pleasanter.”

“Where do you live?” was on the tip of Lucy’s tongue, but at that moment she saw Brêlet making energetic signals to her across the room. With a sudden conscience-stricken remembrance of her supplies next door, she sprang up and bade her new friends a hasty good-bye.

“I hope to see you very soon again,” she found time to say, before she squeezed her way through the increasing crowd.

“All right, Brêlet, just wait a minute until I get my things. Is Miss Willis ready to go?” she asked the poilu, who stood by the door, his full basket slung over his shoulder.

“Yes, I will come with Mademoiselle,” he said, following Lucy outside to the other door, where a scanty supply of the articles she wanted were handed from the desk after a further wait of a quarter of an hour.

All during the hot walk home Lucy thought of Michelle and wondered how soon she should be able to see her again. That afternoon as soon as she sat down to work on the torn linen with Elizabeth, she asked her old nurse how she could manage to visit her new friend. “You see, I suppose she works in the French hospital with her mother, so I don’t know how we can do any work together.



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Will the Germans let me go to her house?" she asked doubtfully.

"The Germans here not so many are that they will bother to see what you do, unless you the town try to leave," was Elizabeth's answer. "When I in the morning to the cottage in the meadows go, you may come with me and stop at the house of your friend."

"Oh, do you know where she lives?" cried Lucy, overjoyed.

"Surely do I. Near by to where stood the sentry when we passed him the other night."

Lucy left off working toward sundown to go and sit with her father, and in him she had an interested listener to Elizabeth's plan for visiting Michelle.

"I'm so glad you've found a friend, little daughter," he said, with sober satisfaction. "It must be so almighty hard and lonesome for you here. But remember, you're never to cross the town even that far without Elizabeth or some one else from the hospital."

Lucy nodded, thinking rather guiltily of her determination to visit Captain Beattie on the first night that Elizabeth was off duty.

Just now, though, she had only one thought in her head. It is no small thing to find a companion one's own age after many days spent among grown-ups. And this girl had appealed to Lucy from the



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first glimpse she caught of her in the street a week ago. Lucy was not given to rushing headlong into friendships, but she did follow her impulses frankly, and on the whole did not often have reason to regret it.

By the following morning Elizabeth had forgotten all about Lucy's inquiries of the day before, and looked up in surprise when she came early into the dining-room greeting her with, "Well, Elizabeth, when may we start?"

Lucy had risen at daybreak, obtained Miss Pearse's consent to her plan, and arranged breakfast trays for the convalescents an hour under the nurse's direction. Then she had sat with her father a while, for it was early in the day that he felt most rested and ready for conversation. Now she felt that it was time her wish was gratified, and sighed regretfully when Elizabeth answered:

"So soon as I can I will go, Miss Lucy. But first I have some work to do, and the Sergeant must sign us the permissions for to-day."

"Oh, all right," agreed Lucy, somewhat pacified at sight of the breakfast Elizabeth was placing on the table.

It was a beautiful early summer morning, with white clouds piled against the soft blue sky, and the sun just warm enough to make the shade feel pleasant. After the unusual heat of the past few



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days it was exhilarating to both mind and body. Lucy felt filled to the brim with life and energy. In spite of herself her spirits soared with hope and confidence in better things to come. Somehow she believed to-day, when she and Elizabeth set out from the hospital half an hour later, that Château-Plessis must soon be restored to its rightful owners. It seemed as though this nightmare of German conquest were but a passing thing and could be bravely borne with that assurance.

There was nothing whatever to suggest a change for the better in reality as they crossed the town. The guns were still silent, except for scattered shots, the German sentries still kept guard over the desolate streets, and the gangs of unhappy old men and boys labored at the piles of débris in sullen submission. Still Lucy's spirits refused to be much dampened. In her mind she debated schemes for carrying food to Captain Beattie, resolving to tell Michelle all about the prisoner at the first opportunity.

"Look, Miss Lucy," said Elizabeth, presently, as they neared the southeastern part of the town. "There is the house of Madame de la Tour." She pointed down the street to a little brick house with a gabled roof. "It is one that she owns before, but now she goes there to live, because it is not much by the shells hurt."



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In a minute they stopped in front of the door and Lucy asked eagerly, "May I go in and see them now? Will you come back for me?" She glanced along the street, which was deserted except for a shuffling old woman making her weary way toward the food depot, and looked back at Elizabeth, who answered thoughtfully:

"I will be only an hour gone, but no longer can I wait to take you back. I have plenty work to do in the hospital to-day. Anyway, you will have with your friend a little visit. But first I wait to see if she is here."

Lucy ran up the short flight of steps and was just about to knock on the door when it opened and Michelle herself stood on the threshold, smiling a welcome.

"I have seen you by the window," she explained, "so I came to open."

"Oh, I'm so glad you are at home," said Lucy, delighted. "All right, Elizabeth! Don't forget to come back for me."

She followed Michelle into the house, which was a bare, homely little place, oddly furnished with a few splendid pieces brought from the old home, eked out with simple stools and tables got from near at hand. But it was neat and homelike, and that meant much to Lucy, after her days spent in the midst of the hospital's terrible activity.



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Madame de la Tour had already gone to the French hospital, and Michelle was putting the house in order while the old servant was busy in the kitchen.

"Sit down upon this chair," she said to Lucy, bringing an old, carved armchair close to the open window. The windows had been open ever since the glass was shattered by the shell-fire, but now that summer had come, the boards which helped keep out the winter cold were put aside.

Michelle pulled up a second chair for herself, and taking some knitting on her lap, exclaimed with a look of pleasant anticipation, "Now we are comfortable, no? It is so long since I have company. I feel almost strange to see a friend."

"There is so much I want to talk about, I can't think where to begin," said Lucy frankly. But as she spoke she remembered her need of making another visit to the old prison, and realized also that such chance of speaking in safe privacy with Michelle might not come soon again. She did not have very long, either, for Elizabeth walked fast.

"Michelle, I want first to tell you about my brother's coming here the other night," she began quickly.

"Your brother—he come here?" gasped Michelle, her English failing her in her amazement.

"Yes," Lucy nodded. She plunged into her



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story and repeated the whole incident of Bob's coming and of her own visit to Captain Beattie's prison. By the time she finished Michelle's eyes were shining, her cheeks were flushed with pink, and the knitting lay unheeded in her hands. When Lucy stopped for breath she burst into such enthusiastic praise and comment that Lucy was almost overcome.

"Goodness, I didn't do anything," she said hastily, for she had not told the story with any idea of winning applause for herself. "The reasons I want you to know about it are, first, because I hope you will let me bring things for Captain Beattie here, and stop for them on my way to the prison. Secondly, because we are friends, and I wanted to tell you about Bob."

Michelle's face was a study; the strangest mixture of warm sympathy and a kind of puzzled doubt. Lucy looked at her wonderingly, for she answered with evident sincerity, "Very gladly will I help you to take things to the poor Englishman. I will go with you if I may—I long so to help a little bit! Oh, Lucy, only to make pass that news of Argenton across the German lines!"

Lucy's heart eagerly responded to this wish, but a queer discomfort at the baffling look in Michelle's eyes kept her a moment silent. Suddenly she realized that while she had told this almost stranger



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her dearest secrets, Michelle, on the other hand, had not opened her lips on the subject of her brother, or of her hopes for the success of the Allies. Lucy was too candid and impulsive to bear this state of things unquestioningly. She looked into Michelle's troubled face and asked, "Why won't you tell me anything about yourself and your family, Michelle? I've trusted you in speaking of Bob's coming. Don't you trust me?"

The French girl started, hesitated, looked again into Lucy's wondering eyes, and burst into a flood of speech.

"Oh, Lucy, I *know* you are with us—like all America! But some Americans are not enough on guard against our enemies. For what you are a friend with that German woman, who has the husband in the fight against us?"

"Of course! What a donkey I am!" exclaimed Lucy, relieved beyond words as things were thus made plain to her. "I forgot all about Elizabeth, Michelle, or I should have guessed what you might think from seeing me always with her. You see, Elizabeth was our old nurse in America—and I've known her since I was four years old. But that would not be enough to make us real friends now. She is just as pro-ally as we are. She does not wish to see the Kaiser win."

As Michelle still looked utterly unconvinced,



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Lucy went back to tell of Elizabeth's rescue of Bob from German hands the year before. She did not stop until Michelle knew of Bob's confidence in the German woman's sincerity, of the message dropped from the airplane, and of Elizabeth's repudiation of her country's war aims and her promise to help in all Lucy's efforts.

Michelle sat silent and astonished, her blue eyes fixed upon Lucy's face.

"Does she hate Germany?" she asked at last.

"Oh, no, but she hates the Junkers ruling her. It is for Germany's own sake that she is pro-ally. Do you see what I mean? Besides, she loves America, where she lived so long. It was the lies that they told her about America that first taught her the truth."

Michelle reflected for a long moment. Then she said slowly, "Lucy, I know your brother would not be deceived, and I believe what you tell me. But it is hard to think the wife of a Boche soldier to be pro-ally."

"Karl isn't a soldier—he's too old. He's only a cook. He was our cook for nearly ten years at home. Anyway, Michelle, you know that I'm all right, and you will soon see that Elizabeth is too. I know how you feel, for I wouldn't have believed her myself, though I've known and trusted her so long, if she had not brought the message from Bob."



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Michelle nodded quickly. "Lucy, I go to tell you now about my brother. But all the same, though I believe you, promise me you will not tell the old nurse a word of what I say."

"I promise," said Lucy, wondering.

An ever-present fear, the look that Madame de la Tour's glance had held when she first saw Lucy's face, lighted Michelle's clear eyes as she bent forward and whispered:

"My brother Armand is a spy for the French army. Once already after the first German victory he made his way into the town."

"How could he!" breathed Lucy with fast beating heart, sudden glorious possibilities awaking in her thoughts.

"I tell you how," said Michelle, her voice trembling with pride and emotion at her brother's gallant exploit. Changed from Michelle's slow and halting English, the story of Armand de la Tour's entrance into the captured town was this:

During an attempted night-raid made by a dozen Germans on the French trenches before Château-Plessis, one of the Germans fell, mortally wounded, in no-man's-land, close to the French lines. Armand, wearing the uniform of a German soldier, leaped out and took the fallen man's place in the darkness. The German attacking party, with Armand among them, regained their own trenches,



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the Germans surprised at the sudden pause in the rifle fire from the French side. Dawn found the spy inside the town, having made a perilous way in on pretense of special duty. Once under the shelter of his mother's roof, he obtained the information he came for and at nightfall returned to the German trenches. Having arranged with his friends on the French side a preconcerted time and place, he went over the top in a pretended attack and reached his own lines in safety.

This feat had led directly to the capture of the town by the French and American troops—the action in which Lucy's father had been wounded.

There was no chance, so far as the Allies knew, of learning anything in Château-Plessis now, but Michelle and her mother knew that anxiety on their behalf would lead Armand to run great risks to enter the town again, and they dreaded lest he attempt it.

"If he should, Michelle," cried Lucy, thrilled at this story of unselfish heroism, "he could take back word from Captain Beattie of what they long to know."

"That is why I make haste to tell you," said Michelle, nodding. "Better you get the English *Capitaine* to write you what he knows, and you bring it here; for though Armand wear the German uniform, he dare not show himself about the streets.



## *A LITTLE FRENCH HEROINE*

Look," she added, pointing through the window, "there is the German woman come for you. Poor thing, she has the heavy basket."

Lucy was not sure whether Michelle really believed in Elizabeth or not, but more than satisfied in any case with her morning's visit, she got up, nodding to Elizabeth that she was coming. Michelle, rising too, slipped an arm through Lucy's with shy friendliness as they went out toward the door.



## CHAPTER IX

### THE FIGHT OVER ARGENTON

BOB GORDON was reading a letter from his mother as he sat in the principal room of a little farmhouse outside of Cantigny. The place had long been abandoned by its owners, and now sheltered a dozen American airmen and as many mechanics, in spite of the serious damage it had suffered when the town was taken. Bob was seated on a three-legged stool, tilted dangerously as he propped his feet against the chimneypiece—or what was left of it in a heap of brick and mortar fragments. The morning sun streamed in on the earthen floor and fell across his face as he read the closely written lines. His thin, brown cheeks were tinged with healthy color, and his whole lean figure in its well-worn khaki looked full of life and vigor. But just now his face was serious and sad, and the eyes he raised from the letter toward the sunny window were darkened with painful anxiety.

He could see his mother's pale face before him as he read, her lips set with that brave firmness that war-time women learned to keep in the midst of



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fear and suffering. Even in her letter she tried to hide her thoughts, and to write hopefully for Bob's sake, though she spoke frankly of the trouble they shared together.

"I can think of nothing but Lucy, Bob, wondering when the time will ever come that I shall see her safe and beyond the power of the enemy. But since that night you saw her with Elizabeth, I can find courage to hope again. How strange things are—the dreadful and the good all mixed together! For I feel so sure that your father would not have made his wonderful recovery if dear little Lucy had not been there beside him."

Bob looked up once more, pondering. His reveries these days were one long rebellion against his helplessness. All his courage and strength of purpose were not enough to bring his little sister out of Château-Plessis across the hotly contested battle line. He and his comrades had all they could do to hold back the German tide, without yet advancing to retake the town. The success of the American troops at Cantigny could be repeated at Château-Plessis—must be—but not without adequate plans of attack and further reinforcements—those reinforcements that every one wanted at once. "Thank heaven, our men are coming overseas now at a good rate," he thought with a sudden hope illuminating his dejection. "And things seem just



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endurable in Château-Plessis. The Boches are few enough there, except those who are flat on their backs." For Bob had news from inside the captured town of which Lucy never guessed.

His restless and unsatisfactory thoughts were cut short by the sound of a footstep on the stone threshold behind him. He swung around toward the door, while the newcomer at sight of him exclaimed:

"Here you are, Bob! I've been looking for you on the field. We're to go up at once. The sergeant is running around with orders just telephoned from up the line." The speaker was a young aviator about Bob's age, so wrapped up in his leather helmet that little of his face could be seen but a pair of twinkling blue eyes.

"What are the orders, Larry?" asked Bob, getting up and cramming his letter into his pocket. "The guns don't seem to be firing very heavily."

"No, it's the same old business. The French observers are trying to get a peep at Argenton. The Boche scouts seemed to be asleep for a while and the French made some bold swoops, but now the enemy has waked up with a vengeance, and if the observers are to see anything they must have some guards to engage the Boche. Where are your duds? I've got to go back to my plane. You're to go up with Jourdin, I think. He's got



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two fine new machine guns on his Spad—you ought to bring down half the German air force with them. Well, I'm going."

Bob slipped into his flying coat, put on his helmet, picked up half a dozen things he needed, and went out just as the sergeant met him at the door with the orders in his hand.

"All right, Sergeant; I'm off," he said, returning the salute. "Where is Major Kitteredge, do you know?"

"He's on the field, sir, or was a minute ago. I think the Lieutenant will find him near the stables."

The sergeant pointed across the farmyard to a broad field behind it, and Bob nodded to him as he started off. The sergeant was a friend of his, and Bob never had a moment's talk with him before his thoughts turned with a pang at his heart to that other friend, Sergeant Cameron, whom he had left behind in a German prison. He had sent him many packages of food and comforts since then, and had even received a printed card of acknowledgment from him, forwarded under Red Cross supervision. But what were presents of food and tobacco—priceless as they were to the prisoner—compared with freedom and a chance to strike a blow in the good cause on such a day as this?

Bob crossed the farmyard and vaulted the fence into the hay-field. The old barn had been con-



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verted into a workshop, and near it stood a dozen men preparing for flight. Six biplanes were waiting on the field, to some of which the mechanics were giving a last careful inspection. Bob found Major Kitteredge beside one of them.

“Good-morning, Major,” he said, saluting. “Any further orders for me?”

“You are to go up as gunner to-day, Gordon,” said the officer, looking up from the papers he held. “We’re short one gunner, and Jourdin wants you. He has received all the orders I have here, so he will pass them on to you. Get off as soon as possible.”

“Yes, sir.”

Major Kitteredge had known Bob when Bob was twelve years old and he, the Major, was a lieutenant in his father’s company. In their most formal intercourse there was an undercurrent of friendliness never quite hidden. He watched Bob keenly for a second now, as the young officer crossed the field to Captain Jourdin’s side.

“You are here, eh, Gordon?” said the Frenchman, throwing away his cigarette with a smile of welcome. “Then we will lead the rest and be the first off the field.” He drew on his gloves and shouted orders to his French mechanics, who shouted back “*Oui, mon capitaine!*” through the whirling of a propeller close by.



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The big biplane in which Bob now took the front, or gunner's seat, strapping himself in behind the two machine guns, was a far different craft from the little thirteen-metre monoplane in which he had landed behind Château-Plessis. Foreseeing, that night, that he might have to dodge and fly for his life, he had chosen one of these swift, strong little hornets, capable of performing the most breakneck evolutions at incredible speed. But this morning he and Jourdin were out to face and force back the enemy, and the heavy-armed Spad was built for combat.

Jourdin gave him the plan of operation in a few quick sentences. The biplanes were to act each one independently, attempting to drive off as many as possible of the enemy planes from their own scouts. At the same time they must keep a sharp lookout for whatever information they might be in a position to pick up.

"We will fly north to Château-Plessis, then on to Argenton," he finished. "Try the speaking-tube, Gordon. All right? *Eh, bien! Partons!*" he shouted to his mechanic, who responded by giving a twirl to the propeller which sent it spinning.

Jourdin opened his throttle and pressed forward on the control stick. They were off down the field in a buoyant, bounding rush. Bob settled himself comfortably, fastening the flap of his helmet.



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Jourdin pulled back his stick, and the machine steadied to a glide, swaying ever so little. The rushing grass disappeared from alongside and in a moment the earth had grown a distant scene below.

In ten minutes they were flying swiftly northward at a height of four thousand feet. Two other flyers had risen from the field after them and were in close pursuit. No enemy planes as yet disturbed the solitude, and Bob fell to looking over his machine guns, the cold air of these high spaces blowing pleasantly against his face. Jourdin led the way confidently for the little squadron, and where he led any airman was well content to follow. In half an hour they were over Château-Plessis, while below them the German trenches spouted fire from long-range anti-aircraft guns. The bombardment at this point was not heavy, the enemy's persistent attempt to push the French and American line further west having met with dismal failure. A few German airplanes darted up from their guard over the trenches, but Jourdin had no desire to engage in battle here. He pointed his machine upward, and Bob had no more than a glimpse of the little town that meant so much to him, before they had mounted to five thousand feet, just below the clouds which hung under the deep blue arch in soft fluffy piles. Below them the enemy planes had given up the chase. The town was only a little



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square made up of dots and lines. Before it, where the trenches ran, rose little smoky puffs that hung in the still air. Even the bursting of the shells was deadened to a dull roar. Captain Jourdin spoke through the tube.

"We'll go a little higher, Gordon, and hide behind those clouds. We shall sight the enemy any moment now, and shall have the advantage if we take him unawares."

While he spoke Château-Plessis was left behind. Argenton was only fifteen minutes distant. Again he pointed the big plane upward another thousand feet, into the midst of a great enveloping, smothering bank of cloudy vapor. The soft, cottony mass gave way, dissolving into clinging wisps of fog that trailed along with them like streamers. Then they burst through a hole in the cloud roof into the upper sunlight—a world of celestial loveliness. Often as Bob had risen above the clouds, he could never do it without marveling anew at the strange beauty around him when the airplane pushed its way through the last foggy barriers. No sky, however beautiful, seen from the earth could compare with the absolute clearness of the dazzling blue about them. Below, the clouds were banked again into close, white masses, tinged here and there with a gold edge where the sun struck them. A mile behind came following two growing dots—a part of



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the squadron which, it seemed to Bob, had laid aside for the moment all thought of battle and, like themselves, were idly exploring this upper dream-land.

A rift in the clouds below put an end to these thoughts, for through it he saw eight airplanes darting back and forth, maneuvering for position. Beyond and below them, near the narrow line of the Avre River, lay the town of Argenton, and, another mile to the west, the old medieval fort behind the fortified ridge. Bob turned his binoculars upon the moving planes, and as he focused the glass he spoke to Jourdin. "Do you see them? Go down a thousand feet."

"All right," returned the pilot promptly. He pushed the stick and the machine dropped swiftly. Bob could see the Allied emblems now on the tails of three of the planes. They were French scouts, and the other five were German Taubes, distinguished by their shape as well as by the great black crosses painted on their wings. At a little distance another group was swaying in combat. He shifted his glass to these and saw that here Allies and enemies were equally matched. Two French scouts and one American battle-plane were fighting three German fliers.

Jourdin seemed to divine his thoughts, for, without waiting for a signal, he bore swiftly down upon



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the Taubes which had surrounded the three Frenchmen just below and were pouring a deadly fire upon them. The scouts were willing enough to run away but, unable to do so, were fighting gamely against impossible odds. Another moment and Jourdin had brought his plane and its weapons into range. Bob turned the trigger handle of his machine gun and pumped a hail of bullets into the wing of the Taube nearest him. He saw the German aviator dart a glance upward as he tried to get his plane out of range in a quick climbing turn. But, before he could sheer off, his wing hung warped and crippled, the silk cut almost to ribbons. The pilot pointed downward, making a try for a landing on one wing, three thousand feet below. Bob saw no more of him. He turned his gun on a Taube which had abandoned the scouts and was firing at him with furious and accurate aim. The bullets whizzed about the big battle-plane, but Jourdin did not remain an easy target. He took a tail-spin, dropped in short circles for a thousand feet, then came up again behind the enemy. Two more Americans had now arrived to engage the Taubes, and the scouts were out of danger. Jourdin spoke into the tube at Bob's ear. "We'll go on west. We're not needed here. I should like to follow our scouts, who are making for the defenses."



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As he spoke they mounted a little and flew off toward the edge of the town marked by the German trenches. A second plane of the squadron followed them as they crossed the French lines and flew over the enemy's trenches, above the fortified ridge. Below, the anti-aircraft gunners were sending up a continuous fire of shells to hinder their further descent. Around them hovered the French scouts, vainly endeavoring to catch a glimpse of the camouflaged defenses through the curtain of fire and smoke spread out beneath them.

"It isn't a bit of use," Bob thought bitterly, after half an hour of this useless watching. "What can we see from here? We are keeping the Boches from sending more planes after our scouts, but what does that amount to?"

As he fumed in helpless impatience, scheming a desperate attempt to penetrate that curtain of fire, Jourdin's calm voice, in its deliberate-sounding English, came to him with a shock of reality.

"We'll go down now, Gordon. I have orders to report at noon through the field telephone station near here, behind our lines. Our squadron can be called together, and at least put some of these Taubes out of the combat. The scouts can accomplish nothing now."

"All right," Bob answered reluctantly. He was roused to the point where it was hard to give up



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without having done anything more than scare off a few German fliers. "Well, the day's not over," he consoled himself, casting a resentful glance down at the German defenses along the ridge, where smoke and flame were spouting from a dozen batteries. The pilot's feet were on the rudder and already the plane was making westward again across the French lines.

Though Captain Jourdin was flying only temporarily with the Americans at Cantigny, he had been given orders to report the morning's events to headquarters, because he could do so with the greatest ease and dispatch. To most of the American fliers the country along the battle line was still a thing to be puzzled out with the aid of maps and glasses by day, and stars and compass by night. But to Jourdin it was old and familiar ground, for this part of Picardy was his home, and these ruined fields and villages he had known since boyhood. Bob thought of Argenton only as a town half destroyed by shell-fire, a place he could always find easily from above, because of the still-standing towers of the old fort behind the blazing line of German batteries. But to the Frenchman it had a different meaning. It was the little town whose quaint, cobbled streets he had often passed through on summer days in his childhood to visit his grandfather, whose old home outside Argenton was now



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a ruin. If it was late enough in the afternoon the peaceful townsfolk had brought their babies out to the old fort to hear the sunset bugle and see the soldiers change guard. No one would have believed in those days that the Germans would ever hammer at its gates and take possession.

Behind the French lines the country stretched in rolling fields to a burned wood. Jourdin steered for a little clump of larches beside which was a telephone shack, sheltered by a bit of rising ground. Bob had the glasses at his eyes, and swiftly picked out a landing-place.

"To the right, Jourdin—make it a hundred yards before you dip. There's a nice level bit before those shell-holes begin."

The pilot leisurely studied the ground, shut off his gas, and glided beautifully downward until the earth rose to meet them with a rush, and the wheels of the big plane touched and ran along the grass to a gradual standstill.

Bob unstrapped himself and got out, glad to stretch his legs. But the next moment he caught sight of a wire slightly out of adjustment on the plane's broad wing, and pointed it out to his companion. "That can't be left, Jourdin. Shall I fix it while you go to report?"

"There's a mechanic in the shack. I'll bring him out," said Jourdin. "If we wait for the repair, let



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us take this chance to eat our ration on the ground. We shall have fifteen minutes."

"Good idea," said Bob with enthusiasm. As Jourdin walked off toward the shack he brought out the little packages of food and laid them on a convenient rock. For a moment he forgot his disappointment at the morning's failure. Nothing can rouse such an appetite as flying, and Bob had not yet learned to enjoy a meal snatched on the wing. He could read, write, think, in fact do many things during a swift flight, but he liked to eat on level ground.

When Jourdin returned and set the mechanic to work, the two young aviators took off their gloves and helmets and, sitting down, devoured their rations of sandwiches and chocolate, along with a canteen of cool water.

A gentle breeze was blowing from the west across the blackened fields. It blew the drifting smoke away from them, and except for the noise of the shells, it seemed almost peaceful in the deserted meadow. Above them the airplanes still floated, but none very near. For the time being the French scouts had given up their search. On a little rising ground not far off stood a ruined windmill, its burned stumps of arms stretching out dismally above level shell-plowed earth that had once been a green wheat-field. There was an old brick chim-



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ney near it, too—all that was left of a little farmhouse. “The Allies have got that much back, anyway,” Bob thought. “The Boches were here last winter.”

Captain Jourdin had risen to his feet and was looking off across the fields in silence. More than once in their familiar intercourse Bob had recognized moments when the Frenchman’s devoted heart was bitterly wrung, and his whole mind distracted from his work at sight of some such hard reminder of his country’s fate. The hands clasped behind his back clenched themselves tightly together as, turning, he said to Bob, “I remember the windmill when that farm was a prosperous little place. The farmer had lived there many years.”

Bob could not think of any answer. There was no asking for pity or encouragement in Jourdin’s calm, melancholy voice. It held more of resolute defiance than any German’s burst of bravado. Bob thought of the lines he had read in an English paper a few days before. They were spoken by a Frenchman, looking over the ruined fields of France, almost as though the writer had seen Jourdin’s shining, dark eyes and written for him:

And we that remember the windmill spinning,  
We may go under, but not in vain,  
For our sons shall come in the new beginning  
And see that the windmill spins again.



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"*C'est fini, mon capitaine,*" said the soldier-mechanic, coming up with a quick salute and a backward gesture toward the airplane.

Bob picked up his helmet, while Jourdin followed the man over to inspect his work. Bob looked up into the blue sky, streaked with feathery cloud streamers, devoutly hoping for better success in the afternoon's offensive. A desperate eagerness took hold of him once more. He had learned a part of the secret of the French soldier's valor—what it means to be fighting to rescue one's family and home—since his father and Lucy were prisoners in Château-Plessis.

"It is all right now," said Jourdin, turning, as Bob came up, from a critical examination of the wing's supports. "Let us get off at once. Look there!" He pointed upward to where three German planes were deliberately crossing the French lines, from which several aircraft quickly rose to intercept them.

"Most of our little squadron stayed near Château-Plessis to engage the enemy there," said Captain Jourdin. "I think we shall be needed to help drive these fellows back."

As he spoke so modestly of what might be expected of him, the light of battle shone in the Frenchman's eyes. He hurriedly completed his preparations for flight. Bob, no less eager, sec-



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onded him in silence, with one more quick glance at the planes now circling overhead. In five minutes they were off down the meadow, and rising swiftly toward the scene of the fight.

No sooner had the Germans seen the French planes mounting to the attack than they sent reinforcements from their own lines. Evidently the persistent hovering of the Allies' scouts over the Argenton defenses was beginning to annoy them. According to their usual tactics when suffering from wounded dignity, they prepared to take the offensive. As the battle-plane carrying Bob and Jourdin approached a height of six thousand feet, and came on a level with the combatants, the situation had not as yet advanced beyond a skirmish. There were eight enemy and seven Allied planes, not counting the newcomer, which evened the numbers. Of the French and American planes, three were heavy machines from the Cantigny squadron, the remaining five light, scouting craft. The Germans were all armored planes, but three were of a heavy, slow-going type, almost invincible by bullet fire, but unable to quickly follow up an advantage. Jourdin gave one keen look around him, as though summing up the odds, then spoke through the tube to Bob:

"We have a good chance of victory, Gordon, but we'll have to fight hard for it!"



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Bob was already convinced of that. He caught sight of Larry Eaton on his left, pouring a murderous fire from his Lewis gun into the heavy German craft maneuvering beside him. But he also saw the man who skilfully guided the Boche machine into position for a swift retaliation on Larry's flank. This pilot was Von Arnheim, the German for whom Bob had been exchanged. One of his feet had been rendered useless by shrapnel fragments, but that had not prevented his returning to the air service. His steel-blue eyes shone out from behind his helmet with all his old reckless audacity, and Bob felt his determination harden and his courage mount to fearlessness at sight of him.

A big German plane swooped down upon him as these thoughts took shape. He saw the gunner jerking his weapon into range. A bare second quicker than his enemy, Bob began pumping his port machine gun. A jet of flame burst out, and the next moment the German machine quivered, its planes twisted to one side, and like a shot bird it fell from sight.

Through the tube Bob faintly heard Jourdin shout, "To the left—look out! I'll put you in range!" He had no time to take breath after his recent victory, before two more of the enemy were upon him. The privilege of flying with the famous French ace had its perils, too. Every Boche who



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could manage to do so made for Jourdin, hoping to down the hero who, once already disposed of, had returned by some miracle to active service. Jourdin brought his machine around in a climbing turn to avoid one aggressor, while Bob pressed the handle of his starboard gun, hoping to rid himself of his right-hand opponent. Instead of the burst of flame which should have resulted, the gun remained silent—jammed.

Bob frantically maneuvered his other gun into position, but the Boche had opened a deadly fire upon him. Bullets spattered through the wings and whizzed around him. At the same instant a third enemy descended from above. Suddenly a machine gun began firing from the other side. Bob saw Larry Eaton's face behind it, and the next moment his newest antagonist wavered, tilted, and the wreck hurtled down six thousand feet to earth. Bob could catch only a glimpse of this, for Jourdin had grasped the need of a momentary retreat. He made a tail-spin, fell a thousand feet, then, having thrown off his enemy, rose in a climbing circle while Bob remedied the jam in his gun and looked around for further developments.

He had not long to wait. Close beside him a German plane was getting into range, and now it began a heavy fire in the midst of a series of plunging dives which did not allow Bob to return the fire



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with any effect. Jourdin made another tail-spin, hoping to come up beneath the enemy, but the German was too quick for him. He dived again and came up in a swift turn beside the Frenchman, pouring out a hail of bullets. Bob was at a white heat of rage. "Once more, Jourdin!" he shouted.

The pilot dived again, simultaneously with the German, and this time the enemy was caught at his own game. Jourdin slowed up and let the other plane sweep past. As the Boche shot upward he followed close in his wake, and for the first time Bob poured shot after shot from a range of a few feet. The big German machine continued swiftly upward, then it lost speed, fell tail foremost, recovered, and finally nose-dived to the ground.

Bob drew a long hard breath and glanced below him. The Allies were holding their own, but two of them were missing. Of the German planes three were gone. He saw no more than this before another airman made for him in a climbing turn. The two planes were in easy range and each gunner began to pour a deadly fire on his opponent. The bullets spattered around Bob over the big plane and lost themselves in space, and still both machines remained uninjured. Jourdin maneuvered with all his skill for an advantage, but his antagonist matched him at every turn. Bob had not even to snatch a look at the enemy pilot to know whose



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hand was on the throttle. Von Arnheim, pale and shining-eyed, sat behind his gunner as though calmly awaiting victory. But it would not be quite so easy as that, Bob thought. His mind was wildly excited, so that the sudden burning pain in his left shoulder seemed to be only a part of his mad eagerness. Jourdin dipped and rose with incredible skill. The fire from the enemy was growing haphazard as the target dodged in every direction, and Bob's steady hand on the trigger grew steadier as his brain grew hot and throbbing. Suddenly Jourdin gave a shout. The gunner of the enemy plane fell forward across his starboard gun. Von Arnheim snatched at the weapon beside him, but in that second Bob had sent a burst of fire through his right plane. The German gave one flashing glance at the torn, bullet-riddled wing, and pushed upon his stick. His big machine pointed swiftly downward. The next instant Jourdin followed, but this time Bob's fire was less accurate in that dizzy descent. At three thousand feet Jourdin stopped in his downward flight and hovered, for Von Arnheim, useless wing and all, had guided his plane to a safe landing inside the German lines.

For a second Bob's disappointment outweighed all his victories, as his eyes followed his enemy's retreat. He had risked death to go down inside his own lines, and Bob understood that feeling.



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He thought Von Arnheim would have it in much stronger measure if he had ever endured the German sort of captivity. Bob knew that never again could he let himself be taken prisoner. From the French trenches over which they floated came a faint sound of voices. He peered over the side of the cockpit and saw hands and helmets waved in the air. They were cheering! His heart leaped with a sudden exultation. Then he glanced upward. The Allies were four to two—victory there, at any rate.

“ Jourdin, do you hear them cheering? ” he asked through the tube, and as he spoke a strange and painful weakness overpowered him until he clutched at the hot barrel of the gun at his right. Cautiously he felt of his aching shoulder and drew away a hand wet with blood. “ So that’s it,” he murmured. “ I’ll have to go back, Jourdin—I’m sorry,” he said, unsteadily.

The pilot’s quick eyes had already seen the red stain oozing through Bob’s torn leather sleeve. With a swift touch he sent the plane speeding through the air at ninety miles an hour, its nose pointed, above the silver ribbon of the Avre, back toward the safe shelter of Cantigny.



## CHAPTER X

### THE PLAN OF THE DEFENSES

It was a dull, gloomy day, with rain clouds dissolving into showers at intervals, and the half-ruined streets of Château-Plessis looked sad and sodden in their battered abandonment. Only an occasional German soldier, wrapped in his poncho, or a woman hurrying by with a shawl over her head passed in front of the hospital. Within, things looked dreary too, Lucy thought, as in her little cap and apron she helped Brêlet wheel the last of the convalescents into the hall off the old court of justice. For the past three days she had undertaken the task of finding amusement and occupation for fifteen or twenty men on the road to recovery, and she had found it the hardest kind of work, since her own spirits were none too high or hopeful. Some of the convalescents were Germans, too, and Lucy had not quite mastered the Red Cross motto of "Neutrality, Humanity."

But to-day she was cheerful and felt equal to doing her very best. The most trying work grows easier if it is done in pleasant company, and Major Greyson had obtained from the German senior



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surgeon an indifferent consent for Michelle de la Tour to help occasionally among the convalescents at the American hospital. There Michelle sat now, by one of the windows opening on the garden, talking to a French soldier with bandaged eyes. Lucy smiled across the room at her, and in her gratitude for her friend's presence on this dark and depressing morning, she seated herself by the side of a young German, who leaned languidly back in his chair, still weak from fever.

"What would you like, Paul?" she asked, kindly. "Some water? All right—in a moment."

She rose to bring the water and, after satisfying half a dozen other demands for it, helped Brêlet distribute the few books and papers available among those well enough to read. Some of the men who felt too weak to make any effort were wheeled in front of the windows, though the outlook of driving rain on crumbling walls Lucy did not think particularly cheering for the wounded *poilus*. It was extraordinary, though, how little attention it took to brighten up a soldier's tired face. Often a few words were enough to start them talking among themselves. Of the twenty in the hall eight were Americans, and the *poilus* always got some amusement in practising their English on their new allies.

Michelle, far more inventive and resourceful than



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Lucy, made up her mind at once to help find occupation for the convalescents.

“Maman and I have already done so in our hospital,” she said eagerly. “It is not so hard—though of course we can do little.”

“What, for instance?” asked Lucy, puzzling. “We can’t possibly get any more papers—except German ones, and the German patients have too many of those already.”

“No, but there are other ways,” Michelle insisted. “We have many willows over by Mère Breton’s cottage. I have brought the young branches for our *poilus* to cut with the knife and weave *paniers*. Oh, they are glad to have work in their fingers! Also, Clemence and I dug the clay from the little brook near the old château. It is far from here. They send a Boche soldier with us. I know well the place, for Armand and I were friends, in the peace, with the children of the château. The *poilus* can make of the clay all kinds of cups and bowls. I know that is pleasant work, for Armand and I have made them, when I was sick long ago and he played with me.”

“I never thought of those things, Michelle,” said Lucy, but in the same breath she added, doubtfully, “Who will show them how to make baskets? Can you?”

“Oh, you will find more than one soldier here



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who already knows. Only we have to bring the willow twigs, and they will make of them baskets in one afternoon."

"I'll get some to-morrow. I can go to the meadows, if Elizabeth comes with me. I must stay a while with Paul Schwartz now, Michelle. He is not well to-day, and I said I would look after him."

"I will come with you for a moment," said Michelle, making a wry face, but hiding her feelings quickly. "They will never let me come here to help if I do nothing for the Boches. He looks not so *vilain* as the rest, I think—like a poor silly boy."

The German to whom Michelle gave this unusual praise had certainly nothing bold nor ferocious about him. As he lay weakly back in his chair, his blue eyes wandered about the hall with a kind of vague curiosity, his blond hair lying in uncut locks against his pale face. For the little that Lucy had seen of him, he had been quiet and melancholy, making few demands on her attention or on that of the nurses. So far, she had not felt interested enough to ask him questions, but this morning as she sat down beside him, with sewing in her hands, she could think of no other way to amuse him.

"Where do you live, Paul?" she asked, wrinkling her forehead a little over the effort of speaking German. Michelle laughed at her labored accent,



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but the soldier understood her, and his dull, blue eyes lighted up a trifle at her words.

“ I come from the *Schwarzwald, Fräulein,*” he answered, nodding his head slowly as he spoke, as though for him the simple fact was full of meaning.

“ Oh, do you? ” said Lucy, suddenly reduced to silence. His words held a strange meaning for her, too. The Black Forest, in which she had never set foot, was familiar ground, nevertheless. All Elizabeth’s stories in the old days had been about it. It was full of gnomes and elves—that she knew. The people you first met when you ventured into it were Hansel and Gretel, going toward the house built of cake and candy. She had never thought of German soldiers living there.

“ What did you do in the forest, Paul? ” she asked vaguely.

“ I lived there,” said the soldier, his interest growing with awakening recollection, “ in my little house with my family, just inside the forest’s border. I am a wood-cutter and we had a fine herd of pigs. The market town is not three miles away—I had a donkey, too.” The light died out of his eyes as he looked gloomily down at his injured leg. Lucy thought she had never seen a man so unfitted to be a soldier.

“ How long have you been fighting? ” asked Michelle, her eyes lifted suddenly to his face.



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"About—three years." The German seemed uncertain. "Yes," he added, nodding thoughtfully, "it must be all that time since the day I got my papers and was told to join my regiment. At the village I heard how the Russians were getting ready to invade the Fatherland. Then how the English would attack us on the other side. At first my wife hoped they would not call me—there were so many others. They said, too, that we could quickly beat the enemy. But they did call me." He ended with a dull melancholy that took the little life out of his face. "I had to leave everything and go. I don't know how things are with Hedwig now."

"But the Russians weren't invading Germany," said Lucy indignantly, while Michelle flashed a warning glance at her. She lowered her voice, but finished obstinately, "Nor the English, either."

"Yes, that is what we heard," maintained Paul, indifferently. "Our Kaiser called us to defend the Fatherland. It was all strange to me, for we don't get much news there in the forest."

Michelle smiled at Lucy's flushed and angry face. "It is no use to talk with him of that," she said in English, with a shake of the head. "He would not understand you—not in many days. The Kaiser told him '*Allons! Marchez!*'—that's all he knows."



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Lucy was silent a moment. "Were you ever in the Black Forest, Michelle?" she asked, giving up her argument.

"Oh, yes, often. Two summers I have been there. It is beautiful—so big and still." Michelle's eyes shone with the words, as though at the remembrance of happy summer days gone by.

"What are there in it besides Germans?" Lucy asked, smiling to herself at the question.

"Bears," said Michelle, laughing—"and many animals. Herds of pigs, too, like this man's. Many wood-cutters live near the border. And, further in, are lodges for huntsmen."

"I've always wanted to go there," said Lucy rather sadly. "I don't care so much about it now."

"Oh, it is lovely still," Michelle objected. "Perhaps when the war is ended the Germans will not be so many there."

"I have a pretty little girl," Paul interrupted them. "She has hair like yours, Fräulein." He pointed to Lucy's corn-colored head with one up-raised finger. "She must be four—five years old now."

Lucy smiled faintly. She tried to imagine this man on the battle-field, engaged in a fierce hand-to-hand fight for the Allies' trenches. He was the very opposite to Karl's brutal and aggressive type, yet he was driven forward by the same irresistible



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force of blind obedience. Perhaps more than one Allied soldier had met death by his hand.

The vision of the firing-line led her thoughts back into another channel, with a quick pang at her heart that was half fear and half eager anticipation. The coming night Elizabeth would be off duty, and the time had come for a second visit to Captain Beattie's prison. The evening promised to be dull and rainy. Lucy was thankful at the prospect of cloudy darkness in place of summer starlight. Michelle had crossed the hall to visit another convalescent, and Lucy rose, too, nodding good-bye to Paul, who had relapsed once more into silent apathy. Her mind was so filled with the evening's expedition, and with her desire to talk to Michelle about it, that her thoughts wandered for a moment. The American soldier, by whom she had sat down to translate a French paper of a month back, remarked shrewdly as he glanced at his little nurse:

"Got somethin' on your mind, Miss?" He bent down to her ear and spoke in a loud whisper. "They haven't pushed on again? Look here, you don't want to believe all these Fritzes tell you!"

"No, no," said Lucy, smiling, "they haven't got on an inch. Major Greyson says he can tell by the guns, when he goes to the depot at that end of the town. Shall I read you this?" she asked, looking over the old paper again. "You'll have to be



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patient, though, for I can't translate French very fast."

At noon she got the moment with Michelle for which she had been waiting. She caught her friend by the arm as she was returning to the nurses' room to take off her cap and apron.

"Michelle, wait a minute! What about to-night?" she asked eagerly.

Michelle darted a look of angry reproach from her blue eyes. She drew Lucy after her in silence into the room and over to a window opening on the deserted garden.

"Oh, Lucy," she faltered, "will you not be careful?" She caught Lucy's hands in hers and looked entreatingly into her downcast face. "Do you know it is my brother's life—his life, that is in danger if they should suspect me? There are Germans all around us here, waiting to learn of any help given to their enemies. If they suspect me they will watch our house—they will catch Armand if he come ——" She spoke so low Lucy could hardly hear her, but she understood and hung her head in sharp remorse and shame.

"I'm sorry, Michelle. I'm an idiot," she said humbly.

Lucy had not Michelle's long and bitter experience to develop her powers of caution and concealment. She was not made for a conspirator, and



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her frank and candid nature did not easily get used to a life in which walls had ears as truly and as perilously as in any old story of intrigue and adventure.

"Can we talk safely here, do you think?" she asked timidly.

"Yes, but speak softly," said Michelle, flashing a forgiving smile. "You wish to tell me the hour when I should look for you?" she asked, once more growing grave and earnest.

"Yes. We will be there as near to nine o'clock as possible. Of course we can't be sure."

"Come to the door by the garden path—you know? I will have ready all that we can spare. It is little."

"Oh, he'll be glad to get it. I can't bring much from here," said Lucy. She had nothing to give but a part of her own scanty food, but remembering the young Englishman, half-starved in his dismal captivity, how trifling her sacrifice seemed.

"I will watch for you. Oh, Lucy, I hope all goes well!" Michelle's eyes were troubled as she spoke, but Lucy, feeling courageous at that moment, smiled back at her, saying:

"Don't worry. The night will be too dark for any one to see us. Look, there's Clemence."

The old Frenchwoman, returning from the food-depot with her basket, was standing outside the



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garden gate, glancing doubtfully past the sentry toward the hospital window. Michelle bade Lucy a hasty good-bye and, drawing her pass from the pocket of her dress, made for the door into the garden.

Elizabeth had taken on herself the task of setting the nurses' table and bringing in their food, so as to watch over Lucy and see that she had enough to eat. It was lunch-time now, and Lucy left the window to help in carrying in the meagre supplies. A platter of baked potatoes, a pot of coffee and two slices apiece of coarse black bread, was what the nurses sat down to after a hard morning's work; but they were hungry enough to find it good. Lucy was, too, but curbing her appetite, she managed in the course of the meal to slip her two potatoes and a slice of bread into her apron pocket unnoticed. It was little enough, she felt, to take a hungry man, but the dairy supplies were strictly reserved for the wounded, and she saw no chance of getting to Mère Breton's cottage that day. She could only hope, with Michelle's help, to eke out a tolerable meal.

She felt the injustice of not confiding in her faithful companion the real need for their visit to the prison. But she had promised Michelle not to reveal a word of her brother's possible coming to any one but Captain Beattie.



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As on the night of their first visit, Lucy made a pretense of going early to bed. She had no difficulty in leaving the empty house unobserved, and ten o'clock found her and Elizabeth on their way to the eastern edge of the town. The rain still fell and the wind blew in gusts around the street corners, and, sweeping through the shell-holes in the walls, brought down loose bricks which fell with a sodden crash. Lucy and Elizabeth had coats wrapped closely about them, but in a few moments they were drenched by the warm pelting downpour. Their feet stumbled among loose stones and splashed into puddles. Lucy stared helplessly ahead into the darkness, trusting entirely to Elizabeth for guidance.

In half an hour, not having met even a sentry, they stole up the garden path to the side door of the de la Tours' house, and Michelle instantly admitted them.

"Oh, poor things! But you are wet like from the river! Sit down, Lucy, *ma pauvre amie*. Stay one moment by the kitchen fire," she exclaimed at sight of the soaked and bedraggled visitors.

"Oh, no, we can't wait," said Lucy, pushing her wet hair from her face, eager to get on and accomplish her purpose before her courage failed. "It's only a warm rain, anyhow—I rather like it."

"Let me go with you?" begged Michelle, bring-



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ing out a little basket she had got ready and looking entreatingly at Lucy. "Maman has gone to bed. She will not know to be afraid for me. I do not want that you should have all the danger."

"No, no, Mademoiselle!" Elizabeth hastily interposed. "Enough it is that I fear for Miss Lucy. You can nothing do to help, and much better you do not go."

"She's right, Michelle. There's nothing you could do. I'm going to bring the paper he gives me here to-morrow so that if—so it will be safe." She had almost blurted out Captain de la Tour's name. When Elizabeth was risking so much to help them, it seemed absurd to Lucy that Michelle should still suspect her. A startled look sprang into the French girl's eyes, but Lucy gave her a reassuring smile to show that she had not forgotten her promise, and cautiously opened the door. "Good-bye, Michelle," she whispered.

In another moment they were out in the rain again, with the little basket of food carefully protected beneath Elizabeth's shawl. It was but half a mile further to the prison and after fifteen minutes' walk through the empty streets, Lucy stood once more before the barred windows in the wall. The drip, drip of the rain against the stone was the only sound except the occasional boom of a cannon from the watchful German lines. Elizabeth had



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taken up her post commanding the window of the guard-room, but to-night a curtain was drawn to shut out the rain, and all was silent inside. Even German guards relax their vigilance with so little to fear as in deserted and ruined Château-Plessis. They knew their prisoners were securely barred and bolted in.

Lucy grasped the wet iron and pulled herself up a step to the window's level, softly calling the young officer's name. No sound came back but the steady drip of the rain which fell upon her upturned face.

"Captain Beattie!" she said again, imploringly.

Some one stirred on a rustling straw bed and footsteps sounded on the stone floor. Then the Englishman's voice from just inside the bars asked uncertainly, "Is that you, Lucy Gordon?"

Then with a little more of its natural energy the voice out of the darkness added, "But you poor child, what a night to be out! Why did you come again?"

"I told you I would," said Lucy, peering through the bars in a vain attempt to see beyond them. "This sort of night is the safest to come. The rain doesn't hurt me. I have something for you, Captain Beattie. I can't get the basket through the bars. Will you hold out your hands?"

"You've brought me some grub, you little friend in need!" exclaimed the prisoner with a sudden



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shake in his low voice. "Can you honestly spare it? I bet you can't."

"Oh, yes indeed; I have plenty. Here, I'll put the things into your hands. They are only two baked potatoes, some bread and eggs and a little chocolate. Be careful—all right, I see now where your hand is."

"I hate to be a funkier, but I'm horribly hungry," admitted the young officer, as his careful hands drew in the contents of the little basket. "They give us the most beastly food. I'm all right, though—I get along. But it's jolly to have a friend like you."

The attempt at cheerfulness in his sad voice struck at Lucy's heart. "I'll come often, Captain Beattie. I'll bring you all I can," she promised eagerly.

"No you won't, Lucy. You mustn't. You don't mind if I call you Lucy? I'll tell you why I like to. I have a little sister named Lucy—at least she was a kid like you before the war, when we used to be together. Now she's eighteen, and learning to be a nurse; but I always think of her as a little girl."

"Of course you may call me that. I'm so glad if I can cheer you up the least bit. Didn't I tell you that my brother Bob was in a German prison?"

"Yes. See here," said Captain Beattie suddenly,



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“how about that brother of yours? I don’t suppose he’s been able to pull off that stunt again?”

“No, but I want the plan of the defenses. Bob may not come again, nor I get word to him, but I’ve found another way.” She stopped for a second, looking fearfully back into the rainy darkness, then turned once more to the window and told him of the chance of Armand de la Tour’s coming.

When she had finished her listener was silent for a moment, then he said slowly, “It’s pretty doubtful that he will get into the town again. Still, those French spies have incredible skill and daring. Anyway, it’s a chance, and I’ll give you the paper. I have it all ready and hidden in the straw of my bed.”

He went further back into the room and after a minute returned to the window. “Can you put it where it will keep dry, Lucy? It’s only drawn on a scrap of the paper they gave me to write home with.”

“Oh, yes, I’ll keep it dry,” Lucy promised, her heart beating high with hope as she took the folded slip from the young officer’s hand.

“I don’t like to give it to you,” he said doubtfully. “It’s beastly bringing you into danger. I’ve camouflaged it pretty well. You’ll see that it looks like a little sketch of German soldiers changing guard, here in the road. The crooked road I’ve



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shaped like the ridge at Argenton, and each group of men stands for a battery. That's all you need tell the Frenchman. Of course it isn't complete, for I couldn't learn everything, but it's enough to give our airmen and gunners the exact range. Oh, what luck, if you could really contrive to get it over! I can't help hoping, though it may be silly. You've managed to do so much already under the Boches' very noses."

"I can't make Captain de la Tour come," said Lucy wistfully. "But if he does I'll surely get this to him."

"Now go, Lucy. I can't bear to have you out there in the rain, and I don't feel so sure of their not seeing you. It's so jolly to have you to talk to, I'm selfish and hate to let you go."

"I'm coming again," said Lucy, smiling with pleasure at his words and at the happy knowledge of success in this much of her plan as, dripping wet, she clung with aching fingers to the rusty bars. "What do you do all day, Captain Beattie? How I wish I could make things better for you."

"I don't do anything. I sit, and walk up and down and then sit again, and wonder by the hour when we'll begin to push the Germans back. Then I look at these bars and convince myself I can't get out, and end by longing for the next meal—if you could call it a meal. I've tried tapping on the



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wall to the soldiers next to me, but either they have gone or the stone is too thick. They don't answer."

At this dismal picture Lucy sighed. She knew how such confinement had tried Bob's active spirit and overcome his power to resist sickness when it came. She was about to offer some words of feeble encouragement when a muffled step around the corner of the building made her hold her breath in terror. The next moment she dropped to the ground and crouched on the wet earth in the shadow of the wall. A German soldier came sauntering by, looking up at the barred windows from under his rubber hood. He seemed to have no particular duty here, for he walked along humming to himself, as though on his way to bed. Before he passed the window beneath which Lucy crouched trembling, another figure came up behind him, splashing with heavy boots through the muddy pools.

"Is that you, Franz?" asked a guttural German voice.

"Yes," responded the man in front, stopping to wait. "You off guard, too?"

"For three hours—not time enough to sleep," grumbled the first speaker. "Why don't they send enough men to garrison the place, if these empty streets must be watched like treasure-chests?"

"Because the front line needs more watching still," said the first man, pausing to cover his rifle



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carefully with his rubber cape. "Those American devil-dogs are getting nasty. You know the little hill with the old *Schloss* on it? There's our weak point, if you ask me. How could we hold the pond and swamp below when they won't spare us artillery for the hill? I've been on guard there to-night, and I tell you we couldn't. I know that much without wearing shoulder straps."

"You seem to know a lot," remarked the other man, still bad-humoredly. "Suppose you tell me where we are to get supper to-night."

They passed on out of hearing, and Lucy, breathing fast with terror, sprang up from the ground. "Good-bye!" she whispered to the darkness of the window, and fled swiftly but with infinite caution through the mud and water of the road, toward the place where Elizabeth waited.

The talk she had just heard meant little at first, when her mind was filled with the wild thought of flight. But the gruff words, spoken in that language she had learned to hate, stuck in her memory as vividly as did the two disconsolate figures standing in the rain before her hiding-place.



## CHAPTER XI

### A CHANCE IN A THOUSAND

“It looks like a regular workshop. Oh, Michelle, I’m so glad you thought of it!” exclaimed Lucy, looking around the hall with admiring eyes. Almost every convalescent soldier had a lump of clay or some willow splits in his fingers, of which he was trying to fashion something pretty or useful, generally without much success. A few of the poilus and Germans were expert basket weavers, and one potter was among them. The rest knew enough to get along with help. As for the Americans, they caused more amusement than had been heard among the men in a long time. Not one of them could weave the willow splits into a symmetrical shape, and only one succeeded in making of the clay anything more than a dumpy jug. This was a little red-headed westerner, who formed his lump into a dozen animals in as many minutes, to the great interest of the Frenchmen about him, ending the exhibition with a figure of a cowboy on horseback, waving a lasso made of a willow sliver.

It was not the quality of the work that made the



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two girls proud and delighted at the result of their hard labor. It was the atmosphere of interested occupation and rivalry, so different from the listless melancholy that takes possession of a roomful of idle men. The work was trifling and almost useless, but it was far better than nothing, and Lucy felt well repaid for her hot walks and the heavy loads carried in her aching arms.

It was two days since her visit to the prison, and she had spent the intervals from work in vain attempts to scheme out a means of getting her precious paper to the Allied lines. One idea she communicated to Michelle, rather expecting to be laughed at.

"Do you think we could tame one of the pigeons that fly around the hospital roof, Michelle? It could take the message so easily."

"But this is their home," Michelle objected. "You must have a bird who longs to return across the lines—who is a stranger here. There were many like that guarded here last month by the French *état-major*. I do not know where they are now."

"What an easy way that would be, and what a safe one," Lucy thought this morning as she went back and forth among the convalescents, giving encouragement since she could not give advice, and seeing that each man had material to work with.



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"Oh, how too bad we must give so much to the Boches!" whispered Michelle, as Lucy picked up a handful of splits for Paul Schwartz to finish his neat basket.

"But we have to," said Lucy, resignedly. It was the sight of the German soldiers working away at the materials furnished by the hard efforts of the two little aides which had caused the German surgeon in charge to give Lucy a brisk nod of approval in passing. She felt more angry than gratified at this condescending reward for her trouble, but she knew his good will was necessary if they were to continue helping the French and Americans.

"I cannot stay long with you this afternoon," said Michelle a few minutes later, when all the patients were again supplied with occupation. "Poor Maman does not get up to-day. She has a bad cold from coming in the rain from the hospital."

"I'm so sorry, Michelle. Could I do anything to help? I suppose the French doctors can give you what she needs?"

"Yes. But one thing I would like to ask of you. I am not sure if you can do it." The French girl gave her friend an appealing look as she said, with a more natural childishness than she had shown Lucy before, "I am very lonely while Maman is ill. If you could come and pass the night with me—I would be grateful."



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"To-night, Michelle? Of course I will! I know how I can manage it. I'll go home with Elizabeth—no one objects to that—and she can leave me at your house. It will be late, though. She can't leave here before ten."

"Oh, how glad I shall be of your company!" Michelle exclaimed, her face instantly brightening. Then her lip curved to a mocking smile as she added, "What could we do without that *chère Boche*, Elizabeth?"

"Laugh at her all you like," said Lucy, unruffled. "I know her better than you."

"I do not laugh at her," Michelle protested. "But to be friend with her seems strange. Never I thought to trust in one of that country again."

"Oh, Michelle, that's not quite fair," Lucy began, but her arguments died away on her lips. She had no right to lecture Michelle, who had seen the worst and would be more than human if the name of German were not hateful to her. "You'll know before long that Elizabeth can be trusted," she contented herself with saying.

"Oh, yes, *sans doute*," answered Michelle, unconvinced, but anxious to make amends for her frankness. "You will come to-night then, Lucy? I will wait for you."

The eagerness in her eyes made Lucy respond quickly, "I certainly will. I may be late, but that



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can't be helped. I'm never sure when Elizabeth can get off."

"Then *au revoir*, and thank you," smiled Michelle, stopping on her way down the hall to carry a handful of wet clay to the American cowboy artist. He in turn presented her with a clay buffalo, quite lifelike with its lowered head and threatening horns. "Only mind you don't break off the horns," he cautioned.

"I'd 'a' given that little Mamzel a fair treat if I hadn't been skeered to try it," he confided to Lucy, after Michelle's departure. "I wanted to make her a little Boche soldier—square head, pig eyes and all—with one of our boys getting a good swipe at him with a bayonet. I'll do it yet."

"Hush!" said Lucy, laughing, but glancing apprehensively around. "You mustn't talk about Boches so loud, Tyler."

At the end of another hour she went off duty in the hall to help Elizabeth bring in the nurses' supper. At the first opportunity she explained the promise made Michelle.

"You'll take me with you, won't you, Elizabeth?" she asked anxiously.

"Oh, yes, Miss Lucy, I think so. In the morning I stop to bring you back after I get the basket full from the little farm. Only," Elizabeth added,



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looking earnestly into Lucy's face, "promise me you don't by yourself to the old prison go."

"I promise—if you'll take me there soon again," said Lucy, thinking sadly that the little stock of provisions she had left Captain Beattie must be already gone. "I hope you can leave early, Elizabeth," she said, returning to the evening's plan. "If you can't Miss Pearse will make such a fuss."

She was happy at the chance of doing Michelle a service, as well as at the prospect of seeing her friend for longer than a hurried hour. Elizabeth was more sympathetic this time, too, than when Lucy had proposed the other expedition. Elizabeth did not encourage patriotism or daring on Lucy's part, and, if she had had her way, would have kept her in safe seclusion.

She did her best to get through her long day's work early, and it was not yet ten o'clock when she left Lucy at the side door of Michelle's house. Lucy was instantly admitted, and her hostess gave her a warm welcome.

"I thought perhaps you do not come, and I feel so sorry," said Michelle, smiling with pleasure as she took Lucy's cape from her shoulders. "Maman is asleep, and Clemence working in the kitchen, because she stayed with Maman to-day while I was at the hospital. You know we give the breakfast



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every morning to the German sentinel on this street."

"You do!" cried Lucy, indignantly.

"Yes, we must. Come and sit here by the candle," said Michelle, leading the way into the little parlor, "and show me what gave you the English *capitaine*. You said that I should see it."

"Of course. I'm going to leave it here with you, anyway. It's the first chance I've had."

Michelle glanced keenly toward the windows, across which calico curtains were drawn, as Lucy raised the hem of her dress and, ripping a few stitches, drew out a folded slip of paper. The two girls sat down at the table on which the flickering candle burned, and Lucy spread the paper out before them.

"I've hardly done more than peek at it myself," she remarked. "You've made me so cautious, Michelle, I don't do anything without stopping to think if it is safe."

"I am glad of that," said Michelle, soberly. "It is better you should be too careful than to forget once that the Boches are always listening. Oh, see; he has drawn it like a picture, that the danger may not be so great for you."

Lucy remembered the Englishman's brief explanation as she bent over the little sketch, and repeated it to Michelle. The drawing was cleverly



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but roughly made with quick strokes of the pen, and, to her eye at least, would have suggested nothing suspicious. Beneath it were scrawled the words, "Changing the Guard." The six groups of German soldiers, leaning lazily on their guns as they awaited their orders to relieve the various outposts, might have been seen any day from Captain Beattie's prison window. As for the curving line of the road as he had drawn it, only an observing eye would notice that the road behind the prison had really far less width and fewer windings. The flower-beds sketched in beyond completed the zig-zag outline. Lucy saw it all now, with a rush of comprehension. The carefully measured lines behind the lounging figures of the guard were the bastions of the great fortified ridge at Argenton. The soldiers were the hidden batteries whose locations had been the object of such deadly and ineffectual search.

"Oh, Michelle," she sighed, filled with eager and helpless longing, "I'd do anything—anything—to get this over to our lines."

"And I, too," exclaimed the French girl with flashing eyes. "But what can we do? We can only wait."

Lucy frowned in bitter rebellion as she folded the paper once more and slipped it carefully into her pocket.



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“I must return to Maman,” said Michelle, picking up the candle. “Perhaps she is awake again.”

Lucy followed her friend up the narrow, dingy stairs, and, as she did so, her exasperation began to give place to a pleasanter and more helpful feeling. She looked forward to spending the night in the de la Tours’ little house. Though they were in enemy hands this house still kept some of the elements of home. Its neat, simple interior, and the united affection of the three who made up the family—for Clemence was one of them by virtue of hardships long shared in common—meant much to Lucy after her days in the crowded hospital and nights in the half-furnished house across the street.

Madame de la Tour was lying awake, but she declared that her sleep had made her feel much better. “There is no need to remain up for me, *mes enfants*,” she said decidedly. “But I am glad you came, *ma petite*,” she added, taking Lucy affectionately by the hand. “My Michelle is very happy to have your company.”

“I wanted to come. It’s lovely to be in a real house—in somebody’s home again,” said Lucy warmly, her eyes filled with sympathy and pity as she looked at the fragile little figure in the bed—an old French peasant bed, with clumsy wooden side boards.

“Then try to have a good night’s sleep,” urged



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Madame de la Tour, fixing her bright eyes on Lucy's face. "Your cheeks are grown thinner than I like to see them."

Lucy was glad to go to bed in these surroundings and made no objection when Michelle led the way with a candle to the little chamber next her own. Old Clemence slept just now on a sofa by her mistress's side. Already, down below, they could hear her noisily bolting doors and doing her best to secure the broken windows by fastening the shutters. The two girls talked a while together, for their sleepiness was not quite proof against the many things each wanted to hear about the other. But presently Michelle stole out to see that her mother wanted nothing, and coming back took up Lucy's candle and wished her good-night.

"I must wake you very early in the morning, you know. How good it will be to have you here for breakfast," she said with friendly satisfaction as she went away.

For the first time in many nights Lucy slept deep and dreamlessly as though she were safe at home again. She could not believe the night was over when, at the first peep of dawn, she woke to find Michelle standing at her bedside, her pretty black hair tumbled about her shoulders and her eyes still heavy with sleep.

"I am very sorry I must call you from the bed



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so early," she apologized. "But I must help Clemence to-day, before I go to the hospital. It is for that we take the breakfast as soon as it grows light."

"All right," said Lucy, yawning and stretching herself awake before she added, "I have to be ready early, anyway, for Elizabeth will stop for me at seven o'clock. I'll help you, too, Michelle. What do you have to do?"

"Not so much," Michelle responded, sitting down for a moment at the foot of Lucy's bed to comb her hair free from its curling tangles. "I make a little coffee for Maman, while Clemence is preparing breakfast for the sentinel. He eats well, *ma foi!*"

"Oh, to think of having to feed him!" exclaimed Lucy, tossing about in her indignation. "Sometimes when I first wake in the morning I can't believe we really are in the German lines. It seems too awful to be true."

"It is much better now than when the Boches make their first capture of the town," said Michelle, the brightness dying out of her face with the words. "Then there were many more here—a regiment. They were proud with victory and cared for no one's prayers. They went into the houses, stealing all they found. Maman and I for two days hid in the hospital. When the officers made again a little



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order in the town we returned to poor Clemence—for she would not leave the house, rather, she tell us, she will stay and fight the Boches who enter. But for all her scolding they take away the little food we have, and Maman and I must go and beg for bread from the sergeant at the *Commissariat*. For wood, also, we must beg, for the soldiers take all we have, and it was February—very cold—with snow upon the ground.”

As Michelle spoke her quiet voice became filled with trembling indignation. She let fall her hair upon her shoulders and pressed her hands together, while her blue eyes shone with the bitter resentment reawakened. She had told Lucy but a tenth part of the suffering and humiliation of those days which, far from being safely past, might be repeated at any moment. Lucy’s indignant sympathy was for an instant too strong for words, and the next Michelle had regained her self-control. Rising from the bed she exclaimed with a kind of scornful impatience at herself:

“It is no good to think of those bad times! Enough that is bad we have still with us.” She turned to smile faintly back at Lucy as she said more cheerfully, “We must have a pleasant breakfast together, so you will like to come and give me your company again.”

Lucy dressed very thoughtfully, her mind filled



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with the glimpse Michelle had given her of that terrible past which had been even harder to endure than the uncertain present. Now Lucy better understood the look that had arrested her attention at first sight of Michelle's face. Lucy had thought that she herself was bearing much, and with passable courage. But how much smaller her trials seemed when compared with Michelle's long years of suffering and anxiety, borne with no other companion than her frail little mother.

When she finished dressing and ran down-stairs Michelle was already in the dining-room, engaged in setting the table with a breakfast of hot pea soup and two slices of coarse black bread. Lucy knew it was the best the house afforded, and she felt reluctant to eat of the precious little store. But evidently her company was worth far more to Michelle than a few mouthfuls of food. The French girl had cheered up from her melancholy, and greeting Lucy with a bright smile, made place for her at the bare wooden table.

"Oh, Lucy," she exclaimed, "if only you had come to see me four years ago, what a nice breakfast I should have given you!" This was the first reference Michelle had ever made to her beautiful old home which was now a ruin. "But perhaps," she added thoughtfully, "you never would have come to France without this war."



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“But after the war I’ll come again, Michelle,” said Lucy eagerly. “I don’t think a friendship begun like ours can ever be forgotten. France and America will never seem so far apart as they did. We won’t think of France any more as a foreign country.”

She looked across the table at her friend for response to her sincere enthusiasm, for Michelle had fallen suddenly silent. Lucy followed her eyes in astonishment, to where they were fixed on the little door which led from the back of the room down to the cellar. As she looked closely at it, trying to discover the cause of Michelle’s motionless attention, she saw that it was not quite shut. Before she had time to think further, she saw the door pushed open, and a German soldier entered the room.

The spoon in Lucy’s hand dropped on the table. A bewildered fear took possession of her. The soldier was a tall, stalwart blond, with dusty and mud-stained uniform, as though fresh from active duty. As he stood there against the door he had closed behind him he panted a little, and his face, seen in the shadowy light, though young, looked haggard and lined with weariness. This picture formed itself in an instant on her mind. The next she heard a trembling cry from Michelle’s lips. The soldier pushed off his little



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round cap and held out his arms. "Michelle!" he said.

"Armand!" Michelle answered, in a voice that was half a sob. With one bound she had crossed the floor and thrown her arms about the soldier's neck, while over his tired face broke a smile as sweet and radiant as her own. "Oh, Armand, *cheri*, *why* did you come? *Mon Dieu*, why did you come!" was all she could say in the first moment of her joy and terror.

"I had to come, to learn that you were safe," he said unsteadily.

Lucy's heart had given one leap, and now it began racing furiously, as her paralyzing fright changed to different emotions. Fear for Michelle's brother, in the deadly peril in which he had placed himself, and a thrill of admiration at his daring exploit, were mingled with the wild delight of knowing that Captain Beattie's paper was safely in her pocket ready to be confided to the Frenchman's keeping.

While these thoughts chased each other through her mind, Michelle turned from her brother, with blue eyes shining in her white, frightened face, to say tremblingly in English, "Oh, Lucy, it is Armand! My friend, *cher* Armand, Mademoiselle Lucy Gordon, who knows all we hope and fear. A brother she has, too, with the Americans."



## CAPTAIN LUCY IN FRANCE

Captain de la Tour stretched a friendly hand to Lucy, with a courteous bow which seemed strange to her from a man in German uniform. He spoke English without Michelle's difficulty.

"Gordon? Is your brother Lieutenant Gordon, the aviator? Then, Mademoiselle, we are not strangers. I have brought him news of how things are in Château-Plessis. For once since the capture I crossed the lines, but could not manage to reach this house."

"We have something to give you—something that will help the Allies," stammered Lucy, almost choking over the words in her realization of success at last in sight.

"Truly? But first of all I must see Maman. She is up-stairs, Michelle? Ill, you say? In bed?" He ran to the stairs, while Michelle, half mad with anxiety, called Clemence from the kitchen and in a few hasty words bade her watch the street and the entrance to the garden.

"I'll watch from the other side," Lucy offered, but Michelle objected:

"You can see better from above. All should be well, and if not, we have no way to forbid that they come in. He will stay only a few minutes. The guard is not changed before two hours more, so not till then will the sentinel come for breakfast. If only it did not grow light so soon!"



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Up-stairs, Armand was kneeling by his mother's bed, questioning her about her welfare with feverish eagerness.

"I had no peace not knowing that you were safe," he said in answer to his mother's reproaches, made in an agony of fear. "How could you think I would not come?"

Lucy stood by the front window breathing fast, her face flushed and burning in the cool morning air. Outside, the sentry was lazily pacing. He passed the house perhaps once in fifteen minutes, but this time he had turned toward it with a curious glance that set Lucy in a frenzy of uncertainty. He had not the look of suspecting that an enemy spy was in the neighborhood, but the house seemed to interest him. Perhaps, Lucy thought, with a rush of hope as he passed on, he was only longing for the hour of relief and the sausages and potatoes awaiting him.

She turned back to the room, where Armand was telling of his entrance into the town, interrupted by a hundred questions from his mother and Michelle. There were such endless things to be asked and answered on both sides, and Lucy herself would have given much for a few words with him. She was listening to his rapid talk, following the French with an effort, when a loud knock sounding on the front door echoed through the house.



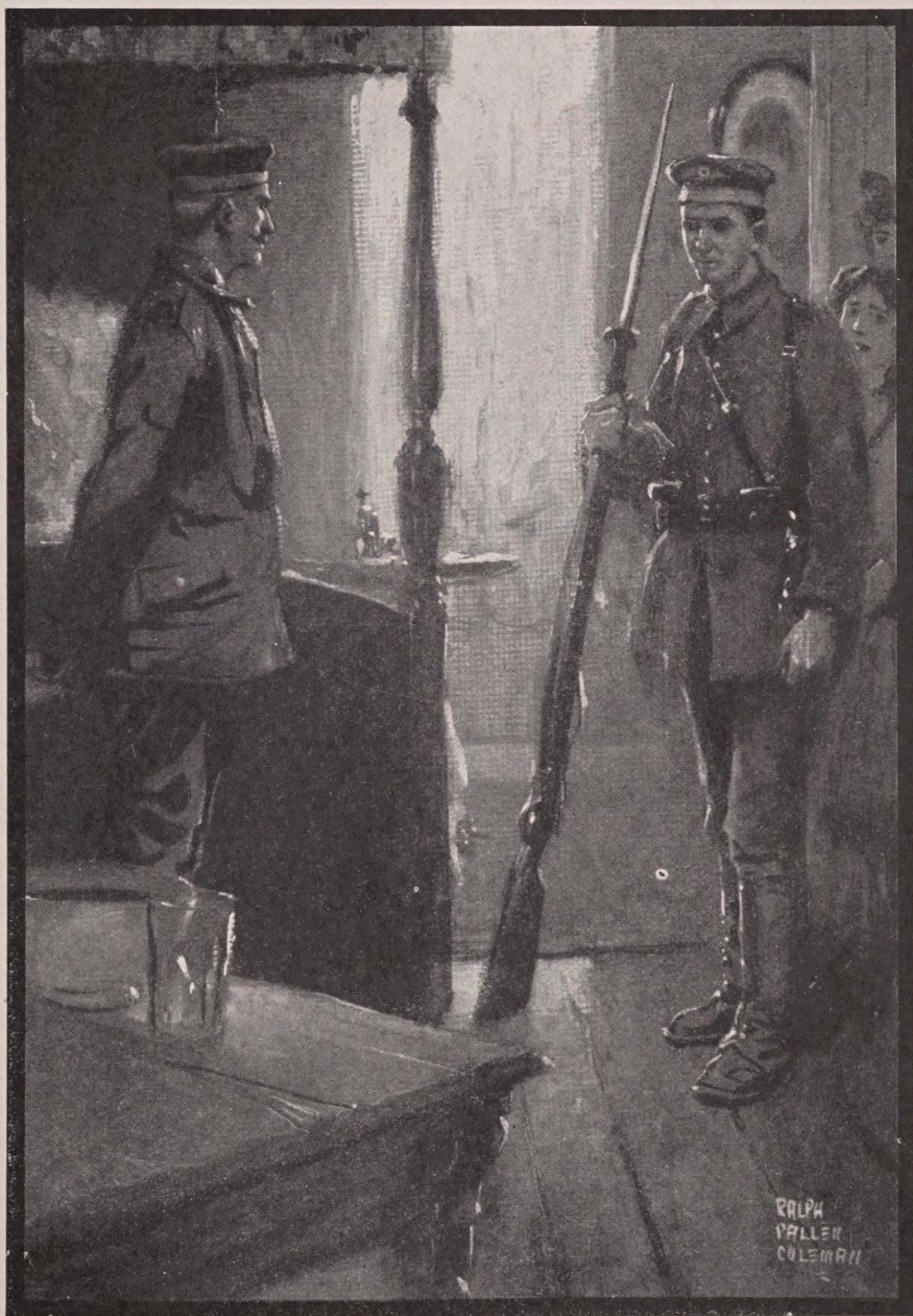
## CAPTAIN LUCY IN FRANCE

Captain de la Tour sprang to his feet, his body alert and his blue eyes flashing. Michelle, seizing his hand, with ashy cheeks and quivering lips, entreated him, "Hide, Armand! Come quickly—in my room!"

The young Frenchman gave a quick shake of the head. "If they suspect me all concealment is useless. You forget I am well disguised. Do as I say and nothing more. Go down, Michelle, and do not deny a German soldier is here."

He listened intently as Michelle silently obeyed him. His mother, white and motionless, waited likewise for signs of what was taking place below. Clemence had admitted some one, and now they heard her voice protesting, and a man's voice, short and surly, in reply. Then Michelle interposed, calm and conciliating. Steps crossed the floor of the hall toward the stairway. There was no time for any plan, Lucy thought wildly. But in the moment that Clemence preceded the intruder up the stairs, Captain de la Tour had drawn from his gray tunic a note-book and pencil, and, standing by his mother's bedside, began jotting down notes with a steady hand. Clemence, red-faced and terrified, ran into the room, her hands wound frenziedly about her apron. After her came the German sentry, a frown on his heavy face and curiosity lighting up his eyes. At sight of the occupants of





"WHAT'S YOUR BUSINESS HERE?"







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the room he made the suggestion of a bow, but he offered no apology for his intrusion as, fingering his gun, he stared at Armand's tall, commanding figure.

"Hello, mate," said Armand in German, looking quietly up from his note-book, as Michelle followed the soldier into the room.

Lucy could not restrain a gasp of amazement at the scene before her. She knew Michelle's wonderful self-control, and did not so much marvel at her hastily assumed look of angry annoyance, un-mixed with the least sign of her mortal anxiety. But to see delicate little Madame de la Tour lying back on her pillows with an expression of cold exasperation, her eyes, glancing from Armand to the sentry, saying plainly that one German soldier had been quite enough without another forcing himself upon her, was such a wonderful change from her helpless terror of a moment past that Lucy could hardly believe her eyes. Even the German sentry looked uncomfortable before the little French lady's calm and silent dignity. He shuffled his feet awkwardly as he answered, with a nod at Armand:

"Hello! You a stranger? What's your business here?"

"Because I'm a stranger to you doesn't mean I'm one to the whole town," returned Armand, with a twitch at the corner of his mouth, as though hiding



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a smile at his own wit. Then, in a more friendly tone, he added, "However, I've no objection to telling you my business. I'm detailed from the third regiment up the line to help here in the supply depot. They're making a new list of the population. The food's not holding out."

"I know that well enough," grumbled the sentry, his inquisitive look changing to one of gloomy dissatisfaction. "Much good you can do about it."

"Now suppose you tell me what you are doing here?" suggested Armand, with a return of his faintly mocking tone.

The sentry leaned on his gun a little sheepishly as he answered, "I'm supposed to keep an eye on who goes in and out along this street." He did not care to confess the real motive for his precipitate entrance. Seeing a fellow soldier enter the garden path and disappear in the shrubbery, he had been seized with a greedy suspicion that the newcomer had designs on his breakfast. A chance shortening of his usual beat had given him this glimpse of Armand, and he had shortened it once more to enter the house after Lucy had watched him pass.

To change the subject he inquired amicably, "The third, did you say you belonged to? That's in the trenches now, isn't it? How did you get off?"

"Two days only," said Armand, without enthusi-



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asm. "I'm on sick leave. Light work, they call this." He closed his note-book and slipped it back inside his tunic.

"Well, are you ready to go?" asked the sentry, restored to good humor. "I'd like some company as far as the end of my beat. I suppose you're not going nearer the meadows than this? There's no one living there."

"No, I'm starting back now," said Armand. He turned toward the bed where Madame de la Tour lay, and giving a slight, stiff bow murmured, "Good-morning, ladies."

The sentry, moved by force of example, made a faint bow likewise, and followed his companion to the stairs. Motionless and silent, Armand's mother and sister watched him go. They heard him engaged in friendly conversation with the German in the hall below, where Armand paused to get his cap from the dining-room. The next minute the door slammed behind the sentry's heavy hand and their footsteps sounded on the stone flags outside.

Lucy and Michelle with one accord rushed to the window. Armand and the sentry were walking slowly down the street. With another few steps a projecting wall hid them from sight. Michelle was shaking from head to foot, and the hand that touched Lucy's was icy cold. But she overcame herself enough to return with Clemence to her



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mother's side and give poor Madame de la Tour the comfort of her presence at that moment. Lucy had not their awful anguish of fear to endure. It was not her brother who walked the streets of Château-Plessis in imminent danger of recognition and certain death. But she was almost as wretched as they in the bitterness of her disappointment. She felt an unreasoning confidence that Captain de la Tour would manage to reach the Allied lines in safety. His nerve and coolness were powerful weapons among the dull-witted German soldiery. But he would return without the slip of paper which she had dared so much to obtain, and which might have brought safety and freedom to them all.

"Twice I've failed," she thought, as with choking throat and eyes blurred with tears she sank miserably down on the little window-seat. "Oh, it seems as though any one could have done better than I!"

Before the occupants of the room had collected their stunned and bewildered thoughts, a second knock sounded on the front door, this time a gentler one.

"That's Elizabeth," exclaimed Lucy, starting to her feet, and winking the tears from her eyes. At the same moment an idea occurred to her at sight of Michelle's white face, and Madame de la Tour's pitiful struggle for hope and courage. "Michelle,



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I'll ask Elizabeth to find out about your brother. To learn where he goes and if he gets safely away. She can go among the soldiers and ask them any questions without being suspected."

"No, no! I beg you!" cried Michelle, suddenly restored to speech and movement. "Never could I trust her with Armand's secret!" Her blue eyes had lighted up with that never-forgotten dread and terror of every German.

Lucy opened her lips to say frankly that her doubts were absurd, and that now, if ever, was a time when Elizabeth could be of service and could relieve the agony of Madame de la Tour's mind. But unwilling to argue the subject before Michelle's mother, she drew her friend toward the stairway instead, saying, "Come down with me while I let Elizabeth in. I want to speak to you."

Michelle agreed, but as they descended the stairs she forestalled Lucy by repeating earnestly, "You must not tell the German woman of my brother! Enough enemies he has already." Her voice broke as she ended, the deadly fear at her heart overwhelming her once more.

Lucy had reached the lower floor and stood staring into the dining-room, uncertain what to say or do. For Elizabeth, receiving no answer to her knocks, had become anxious for Lucy and had entered the house, left unlocked since Armand's de-



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parture. She stood there within a few feet of them, and the day was bright enough for Lucy to see by her face that she had heard Michelle's words.

Michelle gave a gasp herself, but Elizabeth did not wait for either one to speak.

"You need not fear me, Mademoiselle," she said quietly, and Lucy thought she had never seen in that little figure so much proud dignity. "I am not among the enemies of your brudder, since for France I suppose he fights. When I tell Miss Lucy I am pro-ally, it is that I am changed in heart and soul—not only in my tongue. Better you trust me and that we together work, for else it is little good that I can do."

For a moment Michelle was silent, for the struggle in her mind was too intense for words. But at the end of that short pause she spoke, and the hatred and suspicion had left her voice. Grief and anxiety alone remained as she said falteringly, "I will trust you, Elizabeth. You must forgive me that I could not before. I think I do so truly now."

"Only time will show you that I am true," replied Elizabeth, still with a little hurt accent in her voice, as though she felt Michelle's conversation was not yet complete. "It is not for love of France that I have turned against my country. It is for love of Germany."



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“Michelle,” said Lucy, breaking in, fearful the new alliance would not withstand an argument, and wildly anxious to make use of Elizabeth’s help, “I’m going now, and—I’ll do all I can. You trust me, too.” She put her arms around Michelle’s neck, with all the warmth of her sympathy and understanding, and looked into her face. In her eyes she read unwilling consent, and no further objection came from her lips. “I’m going to tell her,” Lucy whispered, absolving herself from her promise. “I’ll come again as soon as I possibly can.”

The next moment she and Elizabeth were outside in the street, walking silently back in the direction of the hospital. Lucy gave a keen glance about her, and seeing only ruined desolation on both sides, quickly began telling Elizabeth the story of Armand’s coming, and of the miserable ill-luck that had prevented the delivery of Captain Beattie’s message. “Elizabeth, what Michelle didn’t want to tell you was that her brother is making his way out of the town now. Can’t you discover for us whether he gets safely out? They are in such awful uncertainty.”

“I will try, Miss Lucy,” Elizabeth promised. “Tell me how he looks, and to what regiment he pretends that he belongs.”

Lucy gave all the details she was able, and, as she spoke, the realization of her failure came over



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her again in a bitter flood of disappointment. "Oh, Elizabeth," she groaned, feeling a desperate need of her old nurse's comforting affection, "to think I should have such a chance and miss it! A chance we can never hope will come again."

Elizabeth could not see Lucy unhappy and remain unmoved. Her dark eyes tenderly softened as she said, with a vain attempt at the consolation beyond her power to give, "Ach, dear Miss Lucy, be not so sad! Long ago when I was a child, there comes to our house a so kind old man, the friend of my father. When any of us children wished long for something he would say: 'Remember the proverb: Many times your cake may to coal turn, but the last time come fair from the oven.'"

"I don't want to hear your old German proverbs!" were the words that rose angrily to Lucy's tongue. But she kept them back. Instead, after a little silence, she said very thoughtfully, a resolution, as yet vague and uncertain, waking to life behind her words, "I think the best proverb is one that an American made up: If you want a thing done, do it yourself."



## CHAPTER XII

### MRS. GORDON AND BOB

AN hour after Mrs. Gordon received news that Bob was wounded she had turned over her little flock of orphans to a fellow-worker's charge and was on her way to Cantigny. Her companion had almost more work of her own than she could manage, in spite of her cheerful willingness to accept the added responsibility. Mrs. Gordon felt conscience-stricken at imposing the task upon her, but nothing at that moment could keep her from her son, if she must walk every step of the way to reach him. The telegram was scarcely a reassuring one. It said, "Wounded, degree undetermined," and it had taken twenty-four hours to come the short distance.

At the moment that she set out, however, fortune favored her. A big motor-lorry, loaded with stores, was crawling along the village street, and a Q. M. officer, to whom she had already appealed for transportation, crossed the street at sight of her, saying:

"Here's your chance, Mrs. Gordon. I'm so glad we can manage. This lorry is going to Cantigny



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and will be faster traveling than the railroad. I can't offer you anything but a seat with the driver."

Mrs. Gordon thanked him from the depths of her heart in a few hurried words, as he stopped the lorry and helped her to a place beside the soldier at the wheel. "Make as good time as you can, Adams," he said. "No short cuts, though. Keep well out of range."

It was only fifteen miles to Cantigny directly northeast, but the necessary détours made the real distance nearer twenty-five. The road was full of holes and cut up into ruts by the heavy traffic to and from the front. On every side the ruin and desolation of blackened shell-torn fields and woodland overpowered the beauty of the springtime, still struggling to show itself in nooks and corners that had escaped the cannon. The soldier at Mrs. Gordon's side, a lanky, pleasant-faced New Englander, withdrew his eyes from the road occasionally to look at his passenger with pity and a kind of troubled helplessness in his glance.

Mrs. Gordon had begun preparing for her journey immediately after reading the telegram. She had not yielded to a moment's weakness or inaction, but had gone methodically through the details of turning over her charges and getting herself ready. It was a hot, sultry morning, and in her preoccupation she did not realize how hard she worked in the



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hour before leaving. Now, seated in the lorry, with two hours at least of waiting before her, her courage seemed all at once to give way, and the dreadful suspense she must endure became unbearable. Her vivid imagination saw Bob seriously wounded, perhaps dying, and wondering why she did not come. The sight tormented her so that she sank her face into her hands, welcoming the hard jolting of the heavy vehicle as at least a momentary distraction from her suffering. Her husband had been given back to her, and could she hope that Bob would be spared too? Then, remembering Lucy, she unreasonably hoped again. Surely Lucy's captivity was enough to bear, and nothing further would be asked of her just now.

"I got a little cold water here, Ma'am," said the soldier, breaking the sound of the laboring motor with an embarrassed cough. "This dust is sure the limit."

Mrs. Gordon looked up at him and read the sympathy in his eyes. He held out to her a full canteen, and she took it gratefully, for the dust-clouds had dried her throat in the first half hour of travel. The dust stuck to her face and hands, too, and powdered her clothing, but she hardly noticed it. She unscrewed the canteen and poured a little of the water into her mouth. It was cool and refreshing and, as she swallowed it, she tried hard to get back



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a little courage and calmness. She had by nature plenty of both and, in a moment, handing back the canteen to the soldier with a word of thanks, she clasped her hands in her lap and looked about her. She could not tell how far they had come, for the landscape was much the same, except that a church tower, with its belfry shot away, rose now from the woody distance.

"When do you think we shall get to Cantigny?" she asked longingly.

"Well," was the thoughtful answer, "sometimes I make it in two hours, but that ain't often. I'll do the best I can, Ma'am. We'll be there by noon, sure. It's not but ten now." He glanced at the pale face beside him, and at the delicate hands clasped so tightly together and added diffidently, "Don't feel so bad, Ma'am. The Lieutenant is a strong young feller. He'll come out right enough."

"Do you know him?" asked Mrs. Gordon, surprised.

"Sure I do. I took over this bus full of stuff for the aero field only last week. Lieutenant Gordon checked off my list, and when he got through he nodded to me and says, 'Good work, Adams. You really brought everything you were supposed to. How did it happen?' I had to laugh at that, Ma'am, because the truth was I did forget a bundle of wire, and the Sergeant called me back for it."



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Bob's mother tried to smile at the soldier's story, though the remembrance of Bob's health and cheerfulness was small comfort now. But she had controlled herself, dreading to become ill and useless at the end of her journey if she yielded longer to her fears. She straightened up resolutely against the hard seat and in a moment answered the man's kindly encouragement by saying, "Oh, I have good hope that he is not seriously wounded. What part of the United States are you from, Adams? Where is your home?"

It was hard to interest herself in the account the Yankee willingly poured forth, but nevertheless she managed it. In return, the time passed more quickly for her, and her nerves grew steadier.

It was about a quarter past twelve when at last they entered Cantigny. It seemed a whole day to Mrs. Gordon that she had sat enveloped in the dust of that endless road, but on the whole the journey had been a quick one. She turned to the soldier with brief thanks and farewell, as they drew up at the steps of the house made into a hospital. An officer appeared in the doorway and Mrs. Gordon, summoning all her reserves of courage, in case she should have to hear the worst, asked hurriedly:

"Lieutenant Gordon, Captain? How is he? I am his mother."

She never afterward forgot the smile with which



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the surgeon promptly answered, "You may stop worrying right now, Mrs. Gordon. Your son had a bullet through his shoulder muscle; but what's that to a strong young man?"

Not until that moment did Mrs. Gordon realize the dread she had endured. Now that the fear was lifted from her heart, she leaned weakly against the doorway, tears blinding her eyes, and hardly knew that the surgeon had taken her arm and was urging her to follow him. But the next minute she was herself again, strengthened by her longing to see with her own eyes that Bob was safe. The surgeon led her into a good-sized room made into a ward, which could accommodate about twenty wounded officers.

He had no need to point Bob out to his mother. In a second she was beside him. He was leaning against his pillows with one arm and shoulder closely bandaged, but his face was not pale nor his bright smile changed as he cried out at sight of her:

"Mother! I knew you'd come! Oh, I'm afraid you've been dreadfully anxious."

Mrs. Gordon could hardly speak, but her eyes told her that Bob was safe and the touch of his cool, strong fingers swept her last fears away. Near by, on a cot half hidden by a screen, lay a young man tossing about and muttering to himself. His face was flushed and a wide bandage was



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wrapped about his head, from which the brown hair had been cut away. Mrs. Gordon turned back to Bob with unspeakable thankfulness in her heart.

“ I knew you’d be worried,” he said, with a frown of anger at sight of his mother’s pale face. “ I was in such a hurry to get off the telegram, for fear you would hear the news some other way, that I bungled things. The obstinate old sergeant here copied the message right off the card they pinned on me at the dressing-station, before they examined my wound. I told him to say ‘slightly wounded,’ but nothing could make him change it.”

“ Never mind, Bob dear. I know now that you are all right,” smiled Mrs. Gordon, sinking down on the little chair beside the cot with a sigh of peaceful weariness. Her face and hands were grimy with dust, but she did not think yet of her discomfort. “ Tell me all about it, Bob—how it happened,” she begged. “ They let you talk, don’t they? ”

“ Yes, indeed. They let me do anything but shrug my shoulders, and I don’t particularly want to do that.” Happy in his mother’s presence and in the knowledge that she was freed from anxiety about him, Bob began telling the story of the fight in which he was wounded. A quarter of an hour passed quickly while Mrs. Gordon listened with fascinated interest, too proud of Bob’s skill and



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daring to wish him more prudent, but sadly fearful for the future in the midst of her satisfaction. His account was cut short by the sound of a footstep at the door of the ward. Bob paused to look up, then forgot his story as he called out with a welcoming smile, "Come on in, Harding! Here she is at last."

While he spoke a young Infantry Captain with a bandaged hand crossed the room, holding out his sound left hand to Mrs. Gordon. A frank, merry smile, that no hardships had yet robbed him of, lighted up his face at the pleasure of the meeting.

"Mrs. Gordon!" he exclaimed, "I *am* glad to see you."

"Dick! You here too?" cried Mrs. Gordon, starting to her feet.

He took her hand and, looking earnestly into her tired face, the smile faded from his lips and he said remorsefully, "If I'd only known in time I'd have gone to you myself with the news of Bob's wound, and saved you all this worry. I'm convalescent and could have got off."

Mrs. Gordon patted the young officer's shoulder, looking at him with friendly affection. "I know you would have, Dick. Thank you for thinking of it. But tell me what you're doing here. You've been wounded again?" Her eyes shrank a little



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from the sight of his bandaged hand, for Dick Harding's first wound had been a serious affair, and well remembered by the Gordons, for it was coincident with Bob's capture and imprisonment.

He held up his hand to show her, saying reassuringly, "It's nothing this time—just a bullet wound. Fingers are all right. Sit down and tell me about yourself." A shadow stole over his face and his eyes saddened as he added, "Don't talk about Lucy if you don't feel like it, but I've thought of her so much. I can't think of anything else."

Mrs. Gordon's eyes filled with sudden tears at his words. His grief and sympathy were so sincere and real that the little he said meant much to her. He had suffered with them during Lucy's captivity, and she and Bob had no secrets from him.

"I have nothing to tell you, dear Dick," she said unsteadily. "The news Bob brought is the last we have." As she spoke her thoughts went back a year to Governor's Island, to Lucy's and this young officer's pleasant friendship. How long it seemed since the July morning that Lucy had waked her to tell her that Dick's regiment had gone.

"I can't help hoping for the best," Captain Harding was saying when she listened to him again. "It seems so wonderful that the Colonel has recovered and that Lucy has found that precious old Elizabeth to watch over her. With such good luck



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I keep looking for more, and, do you know, I'm almost sure it will come."

It was faint enough consolation, but somehow it cheered Mrs. Gordon a little. She smiled at the young officer, thanking him in her heart for his determined optimism. At the same moment a nurse came up to offer her a cup of tea and a chance to wash her dusty face and hands. Beginning to realize her travel-stained appearance she gladly accepted, leaving Captain Harding at Bob's side for a few minutes.

"Dick," said Bob thoughtfully, after his mother had left the two alone, "I'm going to tell her my scheme. It's only fair."

"Your plan to bring Lucy out?" asked Captain Harding, ruffling his hair with a nervous hand, while the troubled anxious look returned to his face. "It seems—almost impossible. No, I won't be a wet-blanket," he added quickly, as Bob frowned at him. "I don't blame you for attempting the impossible. It's beyond endurance to leave her there, and we don't seem much nearer to recapturing the town."

"It's a question of getting some of the information we need or of waiting for reinforcements for a mass attack along this front. I *can't* wait any longer without trying something. Mother is worrying herself sick. If I landed once behind Château-



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Plessis why can't I do it again, and even recross the German lines in safety, with help from you fellows on this side?"

"May I join you, comrades?" asked Captain Jourdin's voice from a few steps away. The Frenchman had paused on his way across the ward for Bob's invitation, which was not slow in coming.

"You're just the person we wish to see!" Bob exclaimed, reaching out a hand to his friend in warm welcome. "It was bully of you to come over. No flights this morning? There's another chair for you, Dick," he added to Captain Harding, who had yielded his own seat to the aviator.

"Yes, but I came down again early. Things are quiet along the line since last night. What is your discussion, if I may know?"

"It's about trying to bring Lucy out of Château-Plessis. Now don't shake your head and say it's a difficult undertaking. I know that well enough, but I'm going to try it."

"Then it is not my advice you wish, but my assistance," remarked the Frenchman. "Tell me your plan and I promise you all the help in my power. I will lead a guarding squadron to keep off enemy fire—is that what you wish?"

"Just exactly," said Bob with enthusiasm. "I don't see why it can't be done. Anyway, once over their lines, I'll know if I can bring her safely back.



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Lucy could crouch down in the observer's seat so as to be almost entirely sheltered."

"And you, Harding?" asked Captain Jourdin. "You will direct your anti-aircraft battery? That will be ticklish work at night, but you can keep the Boches wary and unwilling to fly. Once they are up you cannot do much."

"I can scare them off a part of the line—enough for Bob to make a safe crossing. Our trenches are very near theirs at that point. I'll need searchlights, of course. With luck we might even find a night when they did not fly. They seem decidedly short of scouts around Château-Plessis. They have massed them at Argenton."

"But it seems to me you are two wounded men. How are you to accomplish all this?" inquired Captain Jourdin, in the puzzled tone of a man who thought the adventure more gallant than feasible. Before his mind's eye came some of the many airmen—Allied and enemy—he had seen fall to death. Bob's chance of safety was no more than theirs, and Lucy must helplessly share his danger.

"I'll be up in a week—the surgeon said so," Bob insisted. "And Harding is all right now. He expects they will let him out in three days."

Captain Jourdin rose quickly at sight of Mrs. Gordon, who was just reëntering the ward. "Your mother has come, Gordon!" he said, with keen sur-



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prise and pleasure. "She knows of your plan—we may talk of it?"

"No, but I will tell her right now," said Bob. "I certainly can't try it without her consent."

Jourdin had met Bob's mother in Governor's Island days, and now, in the midst of common fears and perils, they seemed rather friends than acquaintances. Mrs. Gordon greeted him warmly as she joined the little group, looking herself again with the dust quite got rid of.

"What were you saying, Bob?" she asked, smiling at her son, from whom she could hardly take her eyes.

Bob told his plan without delay, and Mrs. Gordon, paling a little, listened in silence until he had finished. She no longer felt as she would have a few months ago at hearing such a proposal. She had endured so much, and had seen such terrific obstacles overcome by skill and daring, that she hesitated to call any feat impossible. It was dreadful to her to think of Lucy's share in such a desperate venture, but no more dreadful than what she was bearing every day in the knowledge of her captivity.

"What can I say?" she asked, her voice shaking a little. "It seems a mad attempt, but if there is a good chance ——" She turned to the Frenchman, fancying that his willingness to help Bob out-



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ran his confidence of success. "Would you have proposed this yourself, Captain Jourdin?" she said earnestly. "You have had more experience than Bob—does it seem too foolhardy to you?"

Jourdin considered a moment, his fine, candid face grave and thoughtful. "We have first of all to make known our coming to Mademoiselle," he said at last. "Successful in that I shall be eager to go on. If the firing is heavy we must come back without her, that is all."

Captain Harding stirred in his chair, frowning as he inquired doubtfully, "How about the old man? I can't see him allowing his squadron to go off like that on private business."

Major Kitteredge, thus referred to, did seem a stumbling-block, and for a moment Bob could find no reply. "Oh, well, he can only refuse," he said finally. "I'll ask him. He's coming to see me to-morrow."

"Anyway, Mrs. Gordon, it is a very indefinite plan yet," said Captain Harding, thinking Bob's mother had endured enough anxiety for one day. "Nothing can be settled until Bob is well, and you know how many things may happen before then. Château-Plessis may even be retaken."

Here the conversation ended, for so many uncertainties entered into the project it was hard to talk it over. Mrs. Gordon had only that day to



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remain with Bob, and the other two officers rose to leave her alone with him.

Early on the following day Mrs. Gordon returned to her duty, and, soon afterward, Bob had his conversation with Major Kitteredge.

His superior officer had been very kind about paying him short visits, and the old friendship between them would ordinarily have made Bob speak boldly. But this time caution urged him to be wary. He had narrowly escaped disaster the night he returned from Château-Plessis, and he doubted much that his chief would sanction a second visit there, or would believe in its possible success. He broached the subject nearest his heart by idly remarking:

“Funny, isn’t it, Major, how different the discipline of the Aviation Corps is from that of the other arms of the Service. I mean, every man is more or less on his own—he can carry out his plan, once he is in the air, without consulting anybody.”

“You mean he can obey orders in whatever way he thinks best,” Major Kitteredge corrected. “He is always following out a plan from Headquarters, though it may be a vague one. He can’t, for instance, sail off and drop bombs on Frankfort, if he has been told to harass the enemy troops at



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Montdidier—though both are praiseworthy objects.”

Bob was silent a moment. “Yes, of course,” he assented. “But if an aviator asked permission to make a certain flight over enemy territory his superior would probably consent, wouldn’t he?”

“For instance?” asked Major Kitteredge, looking keenly at him.

“Well, I know a fellow who is anxious to cross the Boche lines near here for reasons of his own. A risky flight, as it happens, but worth it to him. I wonder if he can get leave.”

“Reasons of his own? You mean he chooses to take great risks on a flight of no military value? No, his commander ought to refuse him leave,” said Major Kitteredge frankly.

“But if he—took the flight, and—let the cat out of the bag later?” Bob persisted.

The elder officer still kept his eyes on his companion. It was fairly plain that he guessed who the fellow was of whom Bob spoke. Watching his chief’s face, Bob oddly remembered an incident of long ago in the West, at Fort Leavenworth, when he had watched that same face with equal anxiety. Bob had coaxed the driver of the Q. M. ambulance which took the post children to school to let him drive the four frisky mules. Neither he nor the



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soldier had counted on passing Lieutenant Kitteredge on the lonely road just outside the reservation. How Bob had hoped that morning that the young officer would not raise his eyes to the driver's seat and notice this serious breach of orders. Bob had already been punished once for it. It seemed impossible that the Lieutenant should not see him, and he scorned to hand over the reins at the last second, even if it could have been done in safety. The officer slightly turned his head and cast a glance in their direction, then he looked straight up the road again, as the ambulance rolled swiftly by. Bob's boyish heart had warmed with gratitude for that friendly blindness. He pulled up the mules, handed the reins back to the driver without a word, and climbed over to his own place.

It was his eager study of Major Kitteredge's face now that brought this little scene so vividly back. Would he be generous once more, in this new favor that Bob sought, and ignore what he could not approve?

"So you want to go into Château-Plessis again, and bring Lucy out?" was the surprising answer he received after a long moment. To Bob's "How did you guess it?" look Major Kitteredge added, smiling, "You're a great conspirator, Bob." Then, grown serious again, he said slowly, "It's a hard question to answer. I hesitate as much on Lucy's



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account as for other reasons. She must share all the danger."

"But if Mother consents ——" Bob put in eagerly.

"At any rate, you can do nothing until you are fit for duty," declared Major Kitteredge. "You know how useless it is to plan a week ahead. Wait until you are well, and then we'll talk about it."

Bob was willing to change the subject for a while. He stretched his injured shoulder carefully, to try its strength. "Another week and I'll be back on duty, Major. It's tough, waiting all this time. I'm so afraid we'll commence a push and I shan't be there, after hoping so long for it."

Bob believed that a week would see him back at work, but the surgeon thought differently, and it was ten days after Mrs. Gordon's departure when he returned to duty. His desire to get on with the plan for Lucy's rescue had only increased with the delay, and now he was determined to make at least a beginning. Major Kitteredge could not object to his communicating with his sister and arranging some signal which should announce their coming when the attempt was made. It was a beautiful morning, with a cloud-flecked sky ideal for his flight over Château-Plessis. The firing along the line was light and scattered. He could surely hang over the meadows, in and out of the veiling clouds,



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with a fair chance of discovering Elizabeth on her daily round. It was still early enough to meet her on her morning trip across the fields.

He had a bundle of papers, containing Lloyd-George's latest speech, beside him on the farmhouse floor. One copy he had spread against a book on his knee, and was carefully pricking it full of holes.

"That you, Jourdin?" he called out, hearing a footfall outside the door.

"Yes," was the answer, as the Frenchman entered the room with his quick, light step.

"Good. Come and help me with this message, will you? I want to say as much as possible in a few words, so Elizabeth can read it quickly. See what you think of this."

He held the sheet of paper to the light, and was about to decipher it when Jourdin, laying a hand upon his shoulder, interrupted him.

"I am very sorry, Bob," he said. "We cannot think of this now. I came to tell you that we must go up at once. The Boches are out in force over Montdidier, and half our little squadron has engaged them. They need help quickly."

Before he finished speaking Bob had sprung to his feet. The German airplanes were always thick around Montdidier. He knew what straits the Americans must be in if they had encountered a full squadron of their heavy-armed Fokkers.



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“ I’ll be with you in two minutes,” he said. “ I’ve been feeling ever since I got up that something was going to happen to-day, but I couldn’t tell what. Blessings on my shoulder for getting well just in time.”



## CHAPTER XIII

### THE PRICE OF VICTORY

EIGHT members of the squadron had remained in Cantigny, and these now took to the air—two biplanes and four light monoplanes. Both Bob and Jourdin were in single-seaters this time; little craft in which the pilot must trust to speed and dexterity of handling for his defense. Bob's heart beat high with hope and confidence as he rose from the field into the bright morning air. They were pointed south for Montdidier, and in ten minutes' flight the monoplanes had outstripped their heavier comrades. Bob carefully examined his guns and everything within reach in the cockpit. His little plane was flying beautifully; the rhythmic pulse of the engine told him all was in perfect order, and a world of glorious opportunity opened again before him. The last days in the hospital had filled him with restless longing. His efforts in Lucy's behalf were for the time being thwarted, and for that very reason he must put in good work to-day against the Boches.

Jourdin flew right ahead of him and Larry Eaton was in a third monoplane at his side. In twenty



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minutes they had neared Montdidier and, above the hot fire from the German trenches, there came swiftly into view the battle in the air. Bob had taken part in several fierce engagements and had grown familiar with the wild thrill that comes with plunging into conflict at thousands of feet above the earth. But, as the little reinforcing squadron drew nearer to the city, he realized that this fight was the greatest he had ever seen.

The air was so filled with planes whirling hither and thither, in furious attack or swift retreat, and the noise of the nearest propellers made such a volume of sound that he could make but a vague guess at the numbers engaged. Gathered together into squadrons, or pursuing each one his enemy independently, the airplanes were fighting in and out among the clouds above the whole of Montdidier and far beyond the city. Bob's thoughts got no further than this in his momentary confusion, when, from a group a few hundred yards in front, a German Albatross scout darted toward him.

He needed no more than this to restore his coolness and determination. He saw the black crosses on the little plane's silvery wings, and the wide muzzle of the machine gun, into which the German was fitting a belt of ammunition. His own gun was already loaded. The two weapons crashed out together, the bullets spattering over both moving



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targets; then each swooped lightly out of range to maneuver again for the advantage. Bob's tactics were different now when no heavy metal body protected him. His Nieuport could not withstand the hail of bullets that Jourdin's battle-plane had received in the fight above Argenton, and to use his guns he must swing his whole machine into range. He glanced quickly over the cockpit and saw that the fire from the trenches was too distant to be dangerous. He was flying at just nine thousand feet. The next instant his enemy came up from below him, trying for a shot at the tail of his machine. Bob dropped in a spin, then paused to discharge a stream of bullets on the German's flank. His enemy dodged, but failed to return the fire. Bob guessed why. His gun was jammed. The German ran away northward, Bob following. The two machines were fairly matched in speed. Another German, scenting danger for his comrade in the escaping plane, made northward too. A third plane followed, and as Bob turned his head to see if this last were friend or foe, the pilot's hand was raised in greeting, and Larry Eaton signaled with a quick gesture that the second German was his quarry.

Bob nodded agreement and, putting on speed, flew after his retreating foe. He was soon making a hundred miles an hour and the summer air, thin



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and cold at this height, cut sharply against his face and made welcome the protection of his leather coat and helmet. The German was speeding too, in spite of having to clean and reload his guns. In another moment he dived so suddenly that Bob flashed right over the spot where he had been, as his enemy mounted in a climbing turn directly underneath. Bob passed too swiftly to receive a close hit, but the German managed to deliver a broadside which cut holes in Bob's left plane and sent bullets whizzing against the cockpit and about his head. Now Bob was in front, his enemy following. Not liking this new arrangement, Bob himself dived, circled up at terrific speed, and fired a burst at his pursuer as the latter was grasping his stick for a plunge. For a second Bob thought he had downed his foe, for the German plane wavered and one wing tilted as though the shots had fatally injured it. But the next moment the plane righted itself. The sudden turn the pilot made in seeking to escape the broadside had caused his machine to veer to one side. The wing was cut by bullets, but not more than Bob's own. Before Bob could bring his gun to bear again upon his shaken enemy, the German darted upward at lightning speed and vanished in a soft white cloud.

Bob hovered, reloaded his guns and, picking up



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his binoculars, looked around for Larry and the antagonist he had pursued. How had Jourdin ever managed, he wondered, to send down the forty-eight enemy planes the famous ace had to his credit. It seemed to Bob sometimes as though the winged fighters were almost invincible. His best efforts, when he flew alone, were usually rewarded by seeing his enemy elude him uninjured.

A cloud lay right beneath him, but as he peered down, searching for the other planes, it floated by, leaving a clear view of the distant earth below. To Bob's astonishment he discovered that he was over Château-Plessis. There, off to his right, were the wide meadows so familiar to his eyes. Directly beneath was the town itself, looking half-ruined on the side nearest the meadows, but growing less damaged toward the centre. His surprise once over at the distance he had covered from Montdidier, his feeling was one of keen regret. His father and Lucy would see the fight above their heads and suffer all the pain of suspense and uncertainty. Their conquerors would give them no news of the battle unless they could announce a German victory. For as these thoughts flashed through Bob's mind he saw that this minor fight was growing into a battle.

From the cloud beneath him darted up two German planes, after one of which Larry Eaton's Nieu-



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port, with its red, white and blue emblems, closely followed. The other German was engaged in a duel with a second American plane, which now appeared behind it, and their loops and spirals left Bob at a loss for the moment to see which had the advantage. His hand was on his control to fly to Larry's aid, for the foe at that instant had turned upon his pursuer. But some good fortune prompting him to glance upward, Bob saw his old enemy descending on him from the shelter of the cloud-bank. The German opened fire, and Bob made a climbing turn to elude him before attempting any offensive. From his height of some fifty feet above his antagonist he saw the German copying his tactics and rising swiftly to get into range. Bob planned a little stratagem. He wanted above all things to get rid of this pursuer, for with the tail of his eye he saw that the fighters below were engaged in deadly struggle.

As the German rose above him, Bob hovered uncertainly, firing at his enemy from an ineffectual distance, while the latter, contemptuous of these scattering bullets, flew nearer on a higher level, and prepared to pounce. Bob left off firing, gave a swift touch to his responsive motor, and rose like lightning to the other side of his adversary. The German snatched at his port machine gun, but in that second Bob's deadly broadside had riddled his



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left wing and torn the fabric to rags. The wire supports cut loose left the wing sagging and powerless. Bob was so close he saw the pilot's look of furious despair. He saw, too, that even at this moment when his machine wavered to fall, the German's hand was on his trigger. Bob dropped in a tail-spin as the gun crashed out. A hundred feet down he paused, hovering, and glanced over the cockpit. His enemy's descent had been quicker than his. He saw the helpless German machine fall to earth among the streets of Château-Plessis.

The next moment he had darted to the aid of the three Allied planes who were now engaged by six Germans. Three of these last had risen from the trenches in front of Château-Plessis. Bob saw with joy that Jourdin was fighting near Larry Eaton's side. The second American was a veteran of the Lafayette squadron. "We have a good chance," Bob thought with rising confidence. At the same time he saw the face of the German pilot, who was gracefully maneuvering his monoplane for a shot on Jourdin's flank. Von Arnheim! Bob sent his plane speeding forward, his determination roused as never before, his eyes on the German's every movement as Von Arnheim sought with incredible nimbleness to throw Jourdin off his guard.

Meanwhile, in Château-Plessis, the friends of the



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Allies were watching the fight with desperate interest. The planes were too high to be clearly seen without glasses, and every pair of French or American binoculars had been confiscated. Colonel Gordon's eagerness had led him out into the garden, his longest walk since his illness, and Lucy glanced anxiously at his pale face from time to time, as side by side they watched the distant planes dart back and forth against the bright blue sky. It was torment to see the fighters' swift movements without being able to distinguish friend from enemy or even to guess at the progress of the battle. When Bob's antagonist fell Lucy hid her eyes in horror and dismay. She clung to her father's arm in panting silence, for words were useless. He knew no more than she whether it was Ally or German, or even Bob himself, who had fallen. The little group gathered around them shifted back and forth in hopeless efforts to get a better sight of the combatants. Only the German officers at Headquarters knew who was winning, and they were not likely to send any news of a reassuring sort to the American hospital.

At Lucy's entreaty, Elizabeth had gone on a vain search for information. Vain at least so far as getting any accurate news was concerned, for Elizabeth dared not question any one higher in rank than a non-commissioned officer, and these were not sup-



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plied with glasses and knew scarcely more than she. The little crowd in the square, among which she paused, was alive with excited speculation, animated or cast down each moment by alternate hopes and fears. Pro-German hopes and fears this time, for most of the crowd, at least the noisiest part of it, was made up of German soldiers. All those off duty or convalescent at the hospitals were there, and Elizabeth soon found an acquaintance.

"Good-day, Sergeant Vogel," she said politely to a burly, broad-shouldered German who stood staring upward at her side. "We are winning, likely enough, I suppose. I can't tell though, from here."

The Sergeant looked down from the sky with a short laugh. "To be sure you can't, Frau. No more can I. All I know is that one of the birds fell just now. I hope with all my heart it brought a Yankee down."

"Where did it fall?" asked Elizabeth, cold with apprehension. Bob's smiling young face flashed before her eyes, and it was hard for her to listen calmly to the Sergeant's reply.

"Off toward the eastern part of the town. It was some enemy, be sure of that. I can guess at the shape of our planes well enough to see that we far outnumber them."

Elizabeth dared not show her agitation, nor con-



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tinue her inquiries. Only a few days past she had questioned this same man about the German soldier who was Armand de la Tour, until he wondered at her idle curiosity. She had learned that Michelle's brother succeeded in getting away undiscovered, but her unusual inquisitiveness had excited some surprise. While she hesitated now whether to go off by herself and try to stumble on some news, or to return to console Lucy as best she could, a soldier came up and murmured something in Sergeant Vogel's ear. The message was not a welcome one. The German's eyebrows and mustaches bristled in an angry frown. His face flushed red and his jaw closed sharply. All the good-humor had left his face, but Elizabeth hazarded a timid question:

"What is it, Sergeant? May I hear the news?"

"No!" snapped the German. "Can't you bottle up your curiosity for a moment? Am I to answer your questions all day?"

Elizabeth guessed that he was only venting his ill-humor on the nearest object, and waited unresentfully in silence. The Sergeant raised his eyes again to the sky, where the airplanes still swooped and circled, and the frown and flush gradually left his face. In a moment Elizabeth spoke gently once more.

"I should be so much obliged to you, Sergeant, for a little news. One good turn deserves another.



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Don't you remember how often I supplied you the best bread and sausage from my nephew's shop? You and Karl were pretty good cronies then."

The German laughed his short laugh again. The recollections Elizabeth called up were pleasant ones. "Well, well, Frau, I see there's no peace until I tell you." He stooped close to her ear and spoke in a gruff whisper. "It was a German plane that fell. The pilot was killed. Keep your mouth shut, now!" he added sharply. "I tell you a bit of news for friendship's sake, but it's not the sort to spread about. Our men are none too cheerful lately as it is. A lot of grumbling dogs!"

Elizabeth sadly shook her head, with a look of silent grief and disappointment. It was not all affected, either, for beneath her genuine joy that the unfortunate pilot was not Bob, and that she could bring relief to Lucy's anxiety, her heart ached at the death of her young countryman. With all her honest soul Elizabeth longed for the Kaiser's bloody tyranny to be overthrown, but sometimes she wondered despairingly if there would be any Germans left to enjoy the blessings of peace.

Eager to return to Lucy, she made her way quickly through the crowd, and across the square to the hospital garden. Lucy and her father were still standing there, gazing up at the sky. Colonel Gordon rested his arm against the broken gate-



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post, but, weary as he was, neither Lucy nor Major Greyson could persuade him to go in. Elizabeth went up to them and as Lucy's anxious eyes met hers, she said in her soft, quick voice:

"It was not Mr. Bob who fell, dear Miss Lucy—nor any American." Her voice sank still lower as she added, "A German it was, but nothing say of it to any one."

The two faces before her lighted as though a cloud were lifted from them. "Oh, Elizabeth, thank you!" breathed Lucy from the depths of her grateful heart. "I knew you'd ——" Her words broke off in a quick gasp. Roused by the stir about her she had again glanced upward. Another airplane was falling to the earth, whirling down through the clear air on one helpless broken wing.

The battle had begun to shift south again, toward Cantigny, but, in the hot fighting of the past few minutes, Bob failed to notice that they were no longer directly above Château-Plessis. Jourdin had sent down one of his antagonists, and Bob tried hard to do as much for Von Arnheim, but without success. Jourdin still eluding him, the German turned all his attention to the young American. Never until that moment had Bob fully realized Von Arnheim's skill and coolness. His own movements, lightning-like as they had seemed before, became suddenly slow and clumsy, while a swift and



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deadly fire enveloped him from the enemy swooping and dodging alongside.

He himself dodged, fell in a tail-spin, then rose again, vainly seeking to throw Von Arnheim off or get him within range. The stream of bullets from his own machine gun scarcely touched the little plane that circled like a gnat around him, never an instant still. Bob's heart began to pound in his ears, and his cool brain grew furious and desperate. Unable to endure the galling fire which was cutting his wings and beating against the body of his plane, he determined to risk a rush at his pursuer. Suddenly the nose of a monoplane shot up in front of him. As Bob's tense fingers felt for the trigger of his second gun the stranger pilot gave a shout, and Larry Eaton's eyes looked into his. Never was help more welcome. Bob's courage soared again, and while Larry pumped bullets on Von Arnheim's flank, Bob climbed swiftly, and, once above his enemy, at last turned an effective fire upon him.

Von Arnheim dodged in a graceful circle, turning this time upon Larry with undiminished vigor. Bob saw that his friend was no more able than himself to withstand these tactics. He shot downward to Larry's help, and, diving between the two planes, delivered a heavy burst of fire on Von Arnheim's right, just as the German had got into range to make an end of his new adversary.



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Larry's blue eyes flashed acknowledgment to Bob, as Von Arnheim, staggered for the moment, sank in a tail-spin, seeking a chance to reload. Bob did not follow him. With frantic haste he reloaded both his guns, feeling cautiously of his left wrist, where a bullet had grazed it. A German Fokker had swooped down upon Larry, and Bob, after one quick glance about him at the airplanes darting in and out among the light clouds, made for the new enemy's left. A German Albatross scout was flying toward Larry on the other side, and Bob thought to engage the Fokker himself, and give Larry a chance for a fair fight with the newcomer. At that instant he heard the familiar crackling of machine-gun fire directly above, and, looking up, saw Von Arnheim coming down upon him.

He dropped, his spin becoming a spiral dive that sent him down a thousand feet, but still the German followed. Bob darted to one side and rose at top speed, looking for the friendly shelter of a cloud. There was none near enough to give him a moment's respite. As he maneuvered his starboard gun into range, resolved to retreat no longer, Von Arnheim, rushing upon him from a slightly higher level, drew his pistol and leveled it at Bob's head. In that breath of time a monoplane, swooping like a hawk from above, came between Von Arnheim and his prey with a mastery equal to the German's own.



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Jourdin's fire struck Von Arnheim full on the flank—impossible to withstand. He dropped like a plummet, avoiding new attack by a zigzag fall, as Bob and Jourdin closely followed. The three were almost on a level. Jourdin glanced keenly in Bob's direction, for Bob's left wing was badly riddled. At that instant Von Arnheim, quick as a flash of light, leaned forward and discharged his pistol at the Frenchman's breast.

Bob did not know that he cried out. Overcome with grief and horror, he saw Jourdin fall helplessly against his gun. The little monoplane, abandoned by its pilot, reeled and tilted. Bob flung his arm up to shut out the sight, but at the sound of a propeller near at hand he raised his head and looked dizzily about him. With one hand he felt blindly for his trigger. Jourdin had fallen, and close to Bob Von Arnheim was circling into range, the light of triumph in his eyes. Bob's troubled glance had hardly rested on his enemy when Larry Eaton, stealing up from below, opened a burst of fire upon Von Arnheim's rear. In that instant, without Larry's interference, Bob would have unresistingly met Jourdin's fate. But as the German turned on his new aggressor, the despair that had held Bob paralyzed gave way before a new emotion. Never in his life had he felt anything like the spirit of indomitable purpose that surged now within him.



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His face grew hard and pale, his eyes flashed like Von Arnheim's own, and with a swift, light touch on his control stick, he flew after Larry in the German's wake.

One thing Bob was sure of. He would send Von Arnheim down or fall himself. Both of them could not survive this battle. He thought coolly and quickly now, every sense on guard as he stole up behind his enemy. The German was beating off Larry's pursuit with steady firing. Larry would try to rush closer in another moment, Bob thought, planning how to take his friend's place in the duel. For Larry's plane was not flying well. It veered too much at a turn of the rudder, and Bob looked at the wings to see if they were badly torn. As he looked, Larry's plane began to sway and the propeller's speed slackened. Engine trouble, Bob guessed now, and gave a shout of warning. The next moment the engine stopped dead, and Larry, abandoning his attack, was forced to volplane down as best he could for a landing.

Von Arnheim followed, firing at the helpless plane in its swift descent, but before he had dived a hundred feet Bob was beside him. All sense of his own danger had vanished as completely as though he were invulnerable to Von Arnheim's skill. With careful aim he fired full at the body of the German plane. It quivered and tilted while Von



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Arnheim, oblivious to his damaged left wing, returned the attack by a withering blast of fire. The bullets sprayed Bob's little monoplane. His riddled right wing began to bend and sag. The instruments on the board in front of him were smashed to atoms. Von Arnheim had dodged again and was behind him. Bob flashed a glance at his own wings and thought he could risk one loop. Without lessening his speed he turned completely over, and darting up behind Von Arnheim in a swift and skilful maneuver discharged his port gun, from a distance of a few yards, on the right wing and rudder.

With a throb of glorious triumph he saw the German plane pitch forward. Unable to recover, it fluttered a moment, vainly struggling for life, then plunged down toward the green fields below. Bob leaned out and watched it crash against the earth. Then, panting a little, he rubbed one hand across his forehead and looked about him. He had left the other fighters behind. No new enemy threatened him, and fortunately, for his plane would hardly answer the rudder. The right wing was a mass of flying ribbons, and the cockpit was dented and hammered in by countless bullets. Even protected by its metal sides, he could not think how he had escaped unhurt. One hand was bleeding, but the wound was only a trifle. He began cautiously



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flying down, fearing to put his damaged wings to the pressure of high speed. His one thought now was to reach Jourdin's side. He might have fallen in some lonely spot where no one would come to him. By the look of the country beneath him, Bob guessed that he was somewhere near Cantigny. He picked out a level bit of ground and glided safely to the grass.

As he landed he caught sight of a fallen airplane in an adjoining field. A little group of four or five men were gathered about it. Von Arnheim, Bob thought, not realizing that his course had been confined to a small circle in the past few moments. He climbed out and began running toward the group in search of information. Passing through a line of shell-torn poplars he came upon Larry Eaton's plane resting at the edge of the field. The next minute Larry himself left the others and came toward him. Bob looked again at the wrecked monoplane beyond, and saw that it was Jourdin's.

Larry slowly nodded in answer to Bob's sad, questioning glance. "He's dead, Bob. He was dead before he fell. He had no other injury when they lifted him out."

In silence Bob drew near and stood by the body of his friend where it lay upon the grass. They had taken off his helmet, and Jourdin's fine face looked calm and peaceful in its utter repose. The



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officers and mechanics gathered about him gave tribute of their grief in downcast looks and gloomy silence. At Bob's approach a flash of satisfaction lighted their eyes for the swift retribution he had meted to Von Arnheim. The officer beside him murmured some words of congratulation and sympathy, but Bob could only nod in answer. He was not ashamed of the tears that rushed to his eyes as he knelt bareheaded at Jourdin's side. He thought of the fight above Argenton, and of the words that had come to his mind that day, as Jourdin stood looking at the ruined countryside:

"We may go under, but not in vain ——"

Not in vain, while America was free and had men left to fight. At that moment, as never before, Bob felt his consecration to the cause that he upheld. Jourdin's faith and deathless courage became part of him.

As he rose unsteadily to his feet, Larry Eaton flung an arm about his shoulders and drew him a little to one side.

"You're wounded, Bob," he said anxiously. "Let me look."

"It's nothing," said Bob, showing the hand he had concealed in his flying-coat. "I don't even feel it."

"It's bleeding, all the same. I'll tie it up for you."



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Under Larry's commonplace words Bob felt such genuine friendly sympathy that he was dumbly grateful. Larry was just a boy like himself who had left Yale to join the army when Bob had left West Point. Their thoughts and feelings had much in common. He held out his hand and let his companion dress the slight wound that caused the bleeding.

"Von Arnheim—is he dead, too?" he asked presently. "Where did he come down?"

"On the other side of that little slope. He was killed by the fall. Bob, you did a wonderful day's work! Think what Von Arnheim's loss means!"

"We paid dearly enough for it," said Bob sombrely.

On the day following the battle Captain Jourdin was buried behind Cantigny, in a part of his well-loved Picardy that the Boches had never reached. Officers, men and townspeople followed the body covered with the Tricolor; his brother aviators flew overhead along his path, and every honor that love and homage could devise was paid him.

At almost the same hour the body of Von Arnheim received honorable burial within the Allied lines. Above his grave were fired the three volleys which are the privilege of every soldier. Under Major Kitteredge's directions Larry Eaton flew



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over the German lines and dropped a message announcing their ace's death.

It was the 21st of June, one month after the capture of Château-Plessis.



## CHAPTER XIV.

### A DESPERATE RESOLVE

WHEN the air battle shifted south again toward Cantigny Lucy and her father were left in a state of dreadful uncertainty. Neither on that day nor the next did they learn the result of the fight, except for the vague rumors that went constantly from mouth to mouth among the friends of the Allies. These felt some hope that the Germans had met defeat, because of the complete silence their conquerors kept on the subject. German victories were usually loudly proclaimed before them. But there was talk of heavy French and American losses, and this depressing news was all that Elizabeth could learn for Lucy.

Unable longer to bear the continual sight of the German officers and men in authority at the hospital, Lucy sought out Michelle the afternoon of the day after the battle.

"Michelle, I can't stand it any longer," she told her friend, in the privacy of the de la Tours' little house. Her calmness and patience had all at once



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fallen from her. Michelle looked at her flushed cheeks and trouble-haunted eyes, and exclaimed, frightened at the change in her:

"But, Lucy—what can you do? No good comes from fear and anger. I know that well. We can do nothing but wait and hope."

"I *can't* wait and I *can't* hope any longer! I'm not like you, Michelle—brave all the time. My courage comes in spurts, and when it goes I am a coward. The one thing I cannot stand is waiting!"

Michelle was silent, but her expressive face said as plainly as words that Lucy might have to bear longer than a month what she herself had borne four years.

"Yes, I know what you think, Michelle," cried Lucy, reading her mind. "It's you who should be desperate, not I. But it was watching the fight yesterday that finished me. Before that I still had a little courage left."

"You mean—your brother?" Michelle asked softly.

"Yes, not knowing anything—if he is safe, or who won the battle. Like Father, I'm getting so I can't sleep or eat or do anything but wonder why on earth the Americans haven't tried to push on."

"I know—I know," Michelle agreed with instant sympathy. "But they will, Lucy. It seems bright



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to us now, who remember the black days before America was with us."

"But, Michelle, Major Greyson and the others who can get near the German lines think the Allies are going to attack. You know how the firing has recommenced toward Montdidier, the last two days? Last night a regiment marched through Château-Plessis on its way south. I'm sure the Germans expect something."

"I hope they will wait for it at the wrong place," said Michelle, sighing, "but they are very hard to surprise."

"I know Captain Beattie's plan of the batteries isn't everything," Lucy went on earnestly, "but he and Bob are so sure that Argenton is the key to an advance along this line. If the Allies can take Argenton they think Château-Plessis and the towns north toward Amiens will fall too. I don't know about Montdidier."

"Yes, so thinks Armand as well," said Michelle, a trifle wearily. "But we cannot reach the other side to tell them what we know."

Lucy fell into gloomy silence. Presently, with an effort at self-control, she raised her hands to smooth her loosened hair, and tried to recover some of her calmness. "You have enough to stand, without bearing my tantrums," she said, looking at Michelle remorsefully. "I'll behave now. Shall



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we go to the hospital? The convalescents are waiting for their work."

"Yes," Michelle nodded, "Clemence goes to the Commissariat now. I can stay at the hospital with you until she returns."

Neither of the two felt much like talking as they crossed the town a few minutes later. Their spirits were heavily clouded, and the occasional sighs and ejaculations of the patient old Frenchwoman trudging beside them found an echo in their own hearts. On entering the hospital Lucy noticed an unusual stir and activity about the wards. That some of the faces turned toward her were sadder than an hour before did not at first strike her, because she was sad herself. But the next moment she met Miss Pearse, and, seeing the young nurse's troubled face, asked anxiously:

"Is anything wrong, Miss Pearse? Anything more, I mean?"

"Only that they are sending some of our convalescents to prison camps to-day. The order came just after you left. Oh, Lucy, I hated so to tell them!" Her voice shook and tears started to her eyes, but she swallowed hastily to overcome her weakness. "I must go and help them get off. Come into the hall and try to cheer them up a bit."

"Easier said than done!" Lucy thought wretchedly. She wanted to do nothing so much as to cry,



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but she had begun to learn the uselessness of that. Michelle caught her hand with a hard squeeze of angry understanding as they went on into the convalescents' hall, where the men to be sent away were assembled.

One of the first that Lucy saw was the little Westerner, Tyler, whose cheerful spirit and jolly little clay images had done so much for the others in the past few days. She longed overwhelmingly to give all she had of help and sympathy to her unfortunate countrymen, for the ten or twelve soldiers, French and American, gathered there were the picture of despondency. The strength which might have upheld them was wanting, for they were scarcely recovered or able to be about. Their cheeks were pale and their bodies thin from suffering and fever. All the courage they could summon was only enough to give their set faces a look of grim endurance.

Of them all Tyler seemed to Lucy the most pitiful. His hopeful cockiness was almost gone, and the strain of getting ready and standing about, after the days spent in bed or in a chair, had nearly exhausted his wiry little frame. Major Greyson went here and there among them, giving what help or advice he could, cast down like them by the knowledge that another hour would see them beyond his power to aid.



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Tyler nodded to Lucy with a last attempt at his persistent cheerfulness.

“Well, Miss,” he remarked, in such a sad ghost of his old chaffing tone that Lucy could hardly bear to listen, “I guess it’s a case of ‘Where do we go from here?’ all right, for us. On to Berlin’s the idea, I suppose. Hope the Kaiser don’t take a fancy to adopt me. Say,” he added, with a look of utter misery in his eyes, “who’d ‘a’ thought, after twenty-five years I’ve spent in Arizona, that I’d end up in Germany?”

Lucy stammered out words of hope and encouragement which deceived him no more than they did herself. As she went on down the line, repeating the same useless efforts, Michelle ran up behind her and caught her sharply by the arm.

The French girl’s eyes were gleaming and two crimson spots burned in her pale cheeks. “Come with me, Lucy!” she commanded rather than asked. “The hard time will come when they leave Château-Plessis! There we must be to say farewell, for they go almost at once! I heard speak the German guard this moment.”

Only half understanding, Lucy allowed herself to be led out of the hall into the big ward. In the bustle and confusion no one noticed their departure. They went out by the side door into the garden and from here Michelle led the way across the



## CAPTAIN LUCY IN FRANCE

square and eastward toward the edge of the town.

As they hurried along, half-running through the almost deserted streets, Michelle explained again her purpose.

"They must pass on the road that goes across the meadows, on their way from Château-Plessis," she said, breathing fast. "It is there when they say *adieu* to the town that they will be *triste*! It is the last French town where they can set foot, for but two miles from here the train will take them into Germany."

"Oh, Michelle, it's too dreadful to bear!" cried Lucy, bitterly rebelling once more against the inevitable.

"It is not the first time that I have seen it," said Michelle, her voice suddenly trembling. "Never before, though, have Americans gone, too."

As they neared the meadows, making for the road that ran across them, north of the German observation post, the empty streets became filled with a steady line of people, hurrying eastward like themselves. Women, their faces half concealed by shawls, with children running beside them, shared the road with bent old men who found a cautious way among the débris of broken stone. Michelle's was not the only loyal French heart to foresee the desolation of the prisoners on reaching the outskirts



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of Château-Plessis. One and all had learned the news somehow and had come out at any cost for a last farewell.

At the edge of the field where Lucy and Michelle paused among the little crowd, stood old Mère Breton with a covered basket on the ground at her feet. The bright eyes beneath her white cap were sparkling with defiance, as with hands on her hips she stared across the grass at the German post, where a sentry walked, looking curiously toward the little throng. Lucy went up to her with a faint smile of greeting, guessing at the contents of the basket and thinking how hopeless any kindness was which could not follow the prisoners beyond the German border.

"I have something here," nodded the French-woman, pointing to her basket in answer to Lucy's glance. "They will get a taste of it on their way, if I should be beaten for befriending them."

Before Lucy could reply, Michelle drew her attention by pointing silently down the street they had left behind. The little column of prisoners was coming along it, preceded by two German soldiers. The faded blue and khaki of the French and American uniforms showed beyond the armed gray figures leading the way. The pace had not been slackened for these men just from the hospital, in



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spite of the hot sun and the difficulty of walking among the broken stone.

As they neared the field some of the men glanced back into the desolate streets of Château-Plessis. Lucy knew how dear and greatly to be desired the little town must seem. Here they had cherished a never-dying hope of freedom, and here, too, were friendly hands to tend them, and friendly faces to look upon. Ahead lay Germany, where how many of their comrades had gone to misery and death; where at best only wretchedness awaited them.

In a moment they had come out on to the meadow road, and with one accord every voice in the little crowd was raised in greeting and farewell. Kind faces, eyes brimming with tears, and hands outstretched with trifling presents of fruit and flowers met the prisoners on their way. The children ran to clasp the soldiers' hands, and Mère Breton, her basket on her arm, gave out her little store of provisions as fast as her quick fingers could move.

All this took so short a time that the guards at the front and rear of the column had scarcely time to interfere. But now, as the cries on every side grew louder and the crowd closed in almost on the prisoners' path, one of the rear guards sprang threateningly forward with upraised rifle. Astonishment and fury were written on his face, that these townspeople, so docile and downtrodden, should



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have dared thus to show their unquenchable love and loyalty. The prisoners passed, and the little crowd, gazing after the retreating column with eyes blurred with tears, hardly noticed the brutal figure advancing upon them. Mère Breton had emptied her basket and was standing now in the road with one hand shading her wrinkled forehead. She was hoping that a little present had found its way to each man's hands. Her thoughts were all with the prisoners on their hard way, but the German guard took her preoccupation for defiance. He had charged down upon the people remaining in the road, and, as these scattered, the butt of his heavy rifle was raised directly above Mère Breton's head.

Whether he really meant to strike the old woman down, or only to terrify her, Lucy never knew. In common with half a dozen others she sprang to Mère Breton's side and dragged her back as the German's rifle cut through the air. Lucy's horror almost robbed her of power to think at that moment, but she had to think quickly, nevertheless. Michelle had rushed in front of the old Frenchwoman, in furious defense. She stood facing the guard with hands clenched at her sides, her blazing eyes confronting the man's angry face, as his rifle struck the earth in its harmless descent. His fingers clutched it as though for another blow and, still seeing Mère Breton as the intended victim, the



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enraged girl was actually going to offer battle to the burly man before her. But Mère Breton had slipped safely among the crowd, and Lucy, with Madame de la Tour's face before her eyes, seized her friend's arm and dragged her back with all her young strength. The guard, indulging in more brandishings of his rifle and a burst of abusive words, turned to rejoin his prisoners.

The little group of people were now fast dispersing, their courage shaken and only fear remaining at the thought of possible punishment. Lucy led Michelle quickly across the meadow toward the town. She did not try to speak at first, for Michelle was still deadly pale and shaking with anger. But she struggled to recover her self-control, and in five minutes more had calmed herself enough to say unsteadily:

"I did not think what I did, Lucy. Only to save that poor old woman I would fight the Boche. I could not help it."

"I know, but think of your mother, Michelle—she comes first," said Lucy, this time the wiser of the two.

"Yes, you are right," responded Michelle, sighing. She walked on with downcast eyes, depressed and miserable after her useless outburst of indignation.

Lucy could not find words to express the pity



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she felt for her. Instead, she changed the subject by saying, "I'm coming to spend the night with you, Michelle. Had you forgotten?"

"No, not at all. I am too glad that you will come to forget," said Michelle sincerely. She looked up at Lucy as she spoke, the blazing light quenched in her eyes. "What time will you come? Perhaps a little more early?"

"I'm not sure. I—Elizabeth may not be able to go when she promised," said Lucy, floundering a little.

"But she said she could bring you early to-night—soon after the dark," Michelle persisted.

"Yes—she said so, but you never know. Don't expect me very early," was Lucy's rather evasive answer. At any other time Michelle would have remarked her friend's lack of candor, but just now she was too unhappy to be observant.

"I'd better leave you here," said Lucy, as they approached the middle of the town. "You are near home, and I shall go straight to the hospital. I'm breaking my word to Father and Miss Pearse every minute—though I suppose our being together isn't quite like running off alone. Anyway, I was so excited I never thought."

"Yes, poor Maman would be sadly anxious if she knew," Michelle agreed soberly. "Good-bye then, *mon amie*. I will wait for you to-night."



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Lucy reëntered the hospital with slow and heavy steps, a quarter of an hour later. She had grown deeply thankful that her father's convalescence was slow and uncertain. Suppose he had been one of those to whom she had just said good-bye? But he was gaining strength daily. Could the time be deferred much longer when he would be sent away? As she pondered these things Major Greyson, who had known her well in the old days, glanced at her, startled by the change in her face. Her hazel eyes had become sombre and watchful, her lips were pressed together, and her cheeks at that moment had lost their healthy color. The surgeon looked after her frowning and troubled. He was thin and worn himself, but he did not think of that.

Lucy was crossing the convalescents' hall, now so sparsely occupied, toward the nurses' dining-room, when a voice called eagerly, "Fräulein! Fräulein!"

Rebelling at the sound of the hateful German tongue, she would have gone on unheeding, but a German doctor was right in her path, and she dared not risk his ill-will. She turned toward the voice and saw Paul Schwartz leaning from his chair with a bright smile on his face. Half Lucy's anger left her at sight of him. She could not cherish it against this simple peasant with the mild eyes and childish flaxen hair.



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"What is it, Paul?" she asked, going up to him.

"I am discharged!" he cried, his voice trembling with joy and his blue eyes shining. "To-morrow I start for home—for the Schwarzwald! I will be lame," he added, his smile fading a little, "but I can get about, and it is much to be at home again."

Lucy had not the heart to say less than, "Oh, that's fine, Paul. I'm so glad. You will see your wife then, and the little girl?"

"Yes, yes, all! And I have my pension, too—quite a sum."

"I will come and say good-bye before you go," Lucy promised, stumbling with the German words, as pity and anger struggled together in her heart. Paul was going back to his peaceful home, thankful to get out of the war. But her father and brother and countrymen were but just entering it. A long, hard fight was ahead of them.

In a minute, however, her natural good sense began to overcome the brooding dread that was tormenting her. "It may not happen," she told herself, trying to be hopeful again. "Anyhow, I won't be any good, this way, for what I have to do." And at thought of one task that lay before her she felt the need of calmness and courage as never before. She nodded to Paul, and went on with a quicker step into the nurses' dining-room.



## CAPTAIN LUCY IN FRANCE

That evening, a little after eight o'clock, Lucy drew near to Michelle's house, and at the garden gate Elizabeth turned to leave her. The German woman had snatched this time to bring Lucy across the town, but her work was by no means done and she was returning at once to the hospital. Lucy bade her good-bye with strange reluctance. She was about to deceive her faithful friend, and she hated the necessity for doing so. But Elizabeth could not spare her any more time to-night, and Lucy well knew she could never win her old nurse's consent to her project.

When Elizabeth had turned her back Lucy went a few steps into the garden and waited behind the shelter of a bush. She must deceive Michelle, too, for on Madame de la Tour's account she did not want her company, glad as she would otherwise have been of it. But, frightened or not, her increasing horror at the German captivity now far outweighed her timidity at venturing alone to the prison. For it was Captain Beattie she was determined to see again, and without another night's delay.

After a moment she went back to the gate and looked cautiously down the street. Elizabeth had disappeared. It was clear moonlight and the deserted street was sharply outlined in light and shadow. There was little chance of moving un-



## *A DESPERATE RESOLVE*

observed in the moon's path, but by contrast with its soft radiance the shadows looked black and deep along the walls. Lucy left the garden and made her way as quickly as constant watchfulness would permit along the now familiar streets leading toward the prison. She was in a miserable state of mind, but the fear that hurried her footsteps was not caused by her own solitary errand. It was all for her father at thought of the irrevocable fate hanging over him. Irrevocable unless she could do something to prevent it, for, however feeble her efforts must be, she saw no other help in sight. Remembering the chances she had missed of communicating with the Allied lines she came near to thorough dejection. How differently Bob would have managed things in her place! She could not know how close to despair her brother was at that moment, and how his cherished plan for her release had died with Jourdin's death. Since the battle of yesterday Lucy hardly dared think of Bob.

She reached the prison square, and slackening her pace, began creeping along in the shadow of the walls. The prison guard-room was lighted and the door open. As she paused uncertainly, flattening herself against the stones of the house opposite, the old guard came noisily out and, shouldering their guns, marched off across the square. The relief proceeded to make a round of the prison.



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Finding all secure, both men retired into the guard-room again and shut the door.

Lucy breathed a thankful sigh and moved cautiously on to where a shadow falling on the street gave her a chance to cross unseen. The next moment she was behind the prison and lifting herself up to Captain Beattie's window.

He was there close by it, as though expecting her, and the warmth of his welcome did something toward cheering her depression.

"You got off safely that night, Lucy?" was his first eager question. "Those prowling soldiers didn't see you? How that's worried me!"

"Oh, they didn't catch a glimpse of me. I'm sorry you've been anxious. Here's all I could bring you, Captain Beattie," she said smiling. "It's better than nothing."

For two days Lucy had saved a part of her bread and potatoes, and these she held out in her handkerchief, close to the bars. The young prisoner's gratitude made her almost happy for a moment. The prison wall cast a deep shade on the moonlight-flooded courtyard, but in spite of it a little light penetrated the bars and, for the first time since she had visited the prison, Lucy could see the young officer's face. It was thin and sad, though a brave smile touched his lips now in answer to her searching glance.



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"What should I do without you, Lucy?" he asked, giving her hand a warm, friendly grasp, as she clung to the bars.

"Goodness, I don't do much," said Lucy, sighing. As she spoke she remembered that time was precious, and her voice grew alert and earnest. "You can't possibly get out of here—that's sure, isn't it?"

The Englishman laughed rather bitterly. "Quite sure. The surest thing I know. Some famous prisoners I've read of contrived to saw their bars with a fish-bone or a pair of scissors, but I don't seem to have the knack of it."

"Don't you ever wonder, though, what you'd do if you could manage to get out—how you would escape to our lines?"

"Of course I do! There never was a prisoner, I expect, who didn't dream of escape. More than that, I have planned it all out—getting across the German lines, I mean. It's a beastly waste of time, but Heavens, I have to think of something. However, I'll be out soon enough," he added grimly. "They've kept me here to be questioned by the divisional commander. He came yesterday, and our talk was so dull I dare say I'll be on my way to Germany within the week."

"Oh, perhaps not—don't think of it," stammered Lucy wretchedly. Then she drew a quick breath.



## CAPTAIN LUCY IN FRANCE

“ I wish you’d tell me, anyway, about your plan to cross the lines, Captain Beattie. You must be so tired of thinking here, all alone. I want to talk to you a little while. The guard has just been around, so they won’t come again.”

“ You know, I heard what those two fellows said the other night when they stopped in front here. Poor kid, how scared you must have been.”

“ I was! You mean what one said about the château hill being a weak point in their defenses? ”

“ Yes—and he was right, too. I’ve been all over that part of the town—last month when the Germans were pushed back. I’m so sure of the ground that my plan for breaking through was made for that spot, even before I heard those soldiers talking.”

“ How would you go about it? They must have some defenses there.”

“ Oh, yes. There’s a trench line running right through the château park—an old one. But, poorly garrisoned as they are here, they don’t hold it in any force. They simply mount guard on the hill, as that fellow told us. They count on being able to reinforce the trenches long before an infantry column could advance across that pond and marsh.”

“ But the big guns—aren’t there any up there? ”

“ There were last winter, but, from what he said,



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there are none now. They must plan to rush them from the rear, in case of an attack. It looks like a real shortage of artillery."

"Well, aren't you going to tell me your scheme?"

"If you really want to hear it. I've spent hours devising it, but I'll cut the telling short. First, you'll have to pretend that I'm outside the bars—for getting out is beyond me."

"All right. You are here where I am."

"And it's about ten at night; but no moon, or at least a clouded one. Starlight would be much better. I creep along the streets to the eastern edge of the town—for I don't dare cross it straight west—until I reach the meadows. These I skirt, gradually getting westward and nearer their lines, until I come out behind the château hill, the southwestern point of the town. This far I'm pretty confident of success. The place is too deserted for me to be discovered, short of villainous ill-luck."

"Now you're behind the château hill," Lucy prompted.

"Getting up the hill through the wood is not very dangerous—past the stream, you know the place? I'm not likely to meet a soul there, for the guards probably go up by the trenches. Now I'm at the top, with the château in front of me, also the trench line and the sentries. But we can take it that the trench isn't held, or they wouldn't have sentries."



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“To right and left stretches the German line. This part is ticklish. Some nights I make it easily enough; others I’m challenged at the second step. I turn left, around the park, avoiding the open lawns, where the artificial lake and the fountains are, and, keeping well under the trees, cross the trenches at an unguarded point. But by the time I’m on the left of the château the cover ends, and, to avoid coming out on to the grass in full sight of a sentry, I have to climb down the side of the hill—a regular precipice just here, if I remember right, but it can’t be helped. It’s dark, mossy rock—no one from the trenches below could see a moving figure against it—and with care I get down to the foot safely and find myself at the edge of the swamp. The trenches are behind me, on the left of the hill, and they are strongly occupied here. The Allies’ lines are a mile away, beyond the swamp and pond and a stretch of level ground. My back aches at thought of covering it, though my khaki is good protection—nearly earth color in the dark.”

“But the swamp—can you get through that?”

“Oh, it’s not a real bog. You don’t go in above your ankles, but every step is likely to make a squelching sound. This is the place where the chances are I would be seen or heard. I have to walk bent almost double among the long grass and reeds. My only hope is that the big night-birds in



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the marsh have accustomed the soldiers' ears to strange noises—for the trenches are only a hundred yards behind me on this side of the hill. Once safely through the marsh, I drop down at the edge of the pond to get my breath and reconnoitre. The pond extends so far that to avoid it would mean a long *détour* in the open. It's not wide, though, scarcely two hundred feet. The castle hill is a quarter of a mile behind me. I'm well on my way, if a stray bullet from one side or the other doesn't find me about this time. If not, I guarantee to slip into that pond without a sound and swim across undiscovered, provided the moon doesn't shine upon it to show me climbing out on the far bank. Star-shells, too, would be my finish. I can only trust there won't any fall my way. Once I've slipped out of the pond and started crawling forward again, barring bullets—and I have faced a lot and missed them—I'm pretty near success."

"But when you get to our trenches—won't they shoot? How will you prove who you are?" Lucy asked with breathless eagerness.

"I'll call out, and show that I'm alone. I'd convince them, right enough. Wish I had the chance! They won't shoot without a look at me. Too many of their own men are likely to be out on listening post."

There was a moment's silence, then the young



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officer said quickly, a keen self-reproach in his low voice, "What am I thinking of, keeping you here to listen to all this nonsense! Go back now, Lucy, at once. You've been here long enough."

"All right," she agreed, after a minute's pre-occupation. She began to speak again, stopped short, and finally stretched her hand through the bars and gave her friend's a warm, lingering clasp. "Good-bye, Captain Beattie," she said, and the Englishman fancied her voice shook a little.

"Good-bye, Lucy! Wish better luck for us both. And come soon again, or you'll find me gone," he answered, forcing what cheerfulness he could into the cheerless words, his pity for Lucy just then stronger than any for himself.

"Good-bye," she repeated, as earnestly as before. Then dropping down from the bars she began her cautious progress back around the prison.

"I will get to the de la Tours' by ten o'clock," she thought, wondering if Michelle had been long expecting her. Then, all Captain Beattie had said crowding into her mind, she glanced up at the moon with troubled eyes. As though it felt that appealing and reproachful look, its bright face vanished from her sight behind a fleecy little cloud.

Early the next morning, when Lucy returned to the hospital, she met Major Greyson in the ward. The surgeon's face was so sad and filled with dis-



## *A DESPERATE RESOLVE*

may that Lucy stared dumbly at him. He did not wait for her to speak.

“I’ve been looking for you,” he said, drawing her aside to a window, his usually brave and hopeful voice dull and heavy. “I’ve done everything possible. I pretended to the last moment. But the German doctor himself examined all the patients to-day. He saw that the Colonel had no fever.”

As Lucy, with swiftly mounting fear, struggled to understand these incoherent phrases, Major Greyson reached out and took her hand in his.

“It’s no use, Lucy. I’ve got to tell you. Your father is considered well enough to travel. He will be sent to Germany day after to-morrow.”



## CHAPTER XV

### ACROSS THE LINES

ABOUT half-past nine that night Lucy entered Miss Pearse's bedroom and left a note on the little dressing-table. Miss Pearse did not come off duty till eleven, so there was time enough, Lucy thought. Then she returned to the hospital and stole into the dining-room. Elizabeth had finished her work there, and against the wall hung the apron the German woman would put on again at daybreak to begin her hard day's labor. Lucy slipped another note into the pocket and turned back to the door with a heavy sigh. She had not the courage for farewells made without betraying her purpose, and to betray it meant to put an end to her plan. Her father's answer would be instant prohibition; Elizabeth would certainly tell Colonel Gordon if Lucy confided in her, and even Michelle's terrified persuasions she could not face just now. The hospital was filled with its usual stream of tireless workers. Lucy made her way unnoticed into the garden and out into the street.

She looked up at the sky with deep gratitude,



## ACROSS THE LINES

for the moon was completely hidden behind dull, heavy clouds. A warm wind was blowing, with rain in its wake. It tossed Lucy's hair about her face, and every gust brought down loose fragments of brick and stone from some crumbling wall near by. She longed for another talk with Captain Beattie, but she knew well enough that the young Englishman would never have told her what he did if he had for a moment guessed her purpose. She was puzzled to discover at that moment that all fear had left her. She did not realize that it was only submerged beneath a far greater fear—the dread of standing at that meadow road and watching her father go by into German captivity.

Her mind was but little excited as she walked quickly along the dark streets toward the west—the road to the supply depot. Her thoughts just then were all with her mother, that mother she had trusted in so entirely for guidance until these last few months, and to whom she could not turn now for help in her necessity. But even this thought of her was some comfort. Lucy felt dimly that her mother, did she know, would understand, in spite of fearing for her safety, that she could not stay helplessly in Château-Plessis, and leave her father to his fate. “If Captain Beattie's knowledge can help the Allies, I must try to reach them,” she thought, without any further doubt or hesitation.



## CAPTAIN LUCY IN FRANCE

At the end of half a mile she came to a narrow street leading south, up a gentle slope. It was the one that she and Michelle had followed when they went to the stream below the château hill in search of clay for the convalescents. Lucy recognized it by the little church that stood at the corner, its pointed spire, still undamaged, showing faintly against the cloudy sky. She turned to the left up the street and stole cautiously along it. This was the part of town nearest the firing-line, and soldiers were likely to be met with. In the south, toward Montdidier, she could hear the guns faintly booming, but in front of Château-Plessis all was quiet enough. The street gradually rose higher, becoming a lane that opened out into woodland part way up the château hill.

It was nearly half a mile from the little church to where the lane ended, and Lucy's cautious feet took some time to cover it. The moon was still hidden, for the storm-clouds had grown heavier. The wind, too, had increased, and when she came out on to the hill the pine branches were tossing furiously about, with a noise like dashing water. She paused for breath, after her quick climb up the slope, and peered ahead through the trees, and then back toward the town. The scattered houses along the street she had left were in darkness, for no unnecessary lights were permitted after eight o'clock.



## ACROSS THE LINES

All around her was darkness, too, through which she could distinguish the black tree-trunks, the outline of the wooded hill in front of her, and the clouds scudding overhead. Her heart had begun to pound with exertion and excitement, and her mind wavered in its calm confidence. But her determination was as strong as ever. If she could not go on cool and fearless, she would do so trembling and afraid, but go on she must.

She drew a long breath and began climbing the hill, through the dense growth of pines. In a few minutes she came to the stream whose course she and Michelle had followed down to the clay bed at the foot of the slope. She could hear the water flowing swiftly over the stones close beside her, and shaping her course by it, she kept near the middle of the hill and before many moments reached the level ground above. Here she stopped, resting her hand on a swaying pine trunk and listening intently. No sound but the wind in the trees came to her ears. Thinking of Captain Beattie's words, "Some nights I make it easily enough—others, I'm challenged at the second step," she crept out of the wood to the edge of the wide open lawns behind the château.

The towers of the beautiful old building rose dimly against the sky about five hundred yards ahead, at the end of a broad avenue of pines. One



## CAPTAIN LUCY IN FRANCE

tower had been destroyed by shell-fire, leaving only a crumbling ruin. Across the lawns she saw the broad, dark line that marked the trenches. Further on, the pine groves closed in again, covering the slopes of the hillside. To the right of the château Lucy caught sight of the little artificial lake, by the dull gleam reflected on its surface. Near the edge stood a summer-house, with slender marble columns. Her eyes lingered on it, trying to detach a dark shadow from the climbing roses that fell in a shower over the white columns. In a minute the shadow moved and became the figure of a German sentry. He strolled out to the border of the lake and raised his head toward the stormy sky. Lucy glanced quickly around her, suddenly cold in spite of the sultry heat before the storm. She felt surrounded, trapped, before she had even left the cover of the woods. That solitary sentry became a company of men searching for her with keen, merciless eyes. Furious at her own weakness, she looked around once more for reassurance. There were no other guards in sight. Anyway, she must go on. She crept back into the shadow of the pines and began circling the crest of the hill to the left, watching and listening with infinite caution. Of the trenches running across the lawns she had seen nothing but a dark line of sand-bag defenses. If there were men behind them they were invisible. She was fol-



## ACROSS THE LINES

lowing one of the pretty paths that wound through the wooded park of the château. In another moment she came upon felled pine trunks and heaped-up earth, over which she stumbled. Breathless with terror, she waited tensely for a challenge, but none came. Not a voice was heard, though before her she could now see the trench-line, a deep cut in the ground, with piled-up earth in front of it. She stole up to the very edge and looked down. A fallen pine trunk had been laid across as a foot-bridge. The complete lack of human voices or movement below told her that the trench was deserted.

But no answering hope or confidence sprang up within her. That lazy figure by the lake had not looked as if he had the entire hill to guard. If the trenches were empty the line was watched some other way. In her wary and suspicious advance Lucy put one foot on the slab of pine trunk that served as bridge, testing her foothold and staring across into the shadows. Just as she started forward a twig cracked beneath a heavy foot and a sentry came into view on the other side of the trench. Lucy had flung herself on the ground among the fallen boughs before the German had even time to turn his head. The wind sighing through the branches effectively drowned whatever slight noise she made. The sentry shifted his gun



## CAPTAIN LUCY IN FRANCE

without a glance in her direction and passed up the line among the trees.

For five minutes Lucy lay there motionless, and at the end of that time the sentry returned along his beat. At his reappearance despair almost conquered Lucy's terror. She knew she dared not venture across that "abandoned" line. In the darkness, on unknown ground, she stood little chance of passing undiscovered. To judge by the length of the soldier's beat, at least a dozen sentries must be patrolling the woods about the castle. The lawns were easily watched from the summer-houses or from the château. For one desperate minute retreat suggested itself to Lucy's mind. But self-reproach and anger mounted swifter than the thought took shape, and she knew that her purpose remained undaunted. All courage aside, she was as afraid to turn back as to go on; to make her way to the town again, confessing failure and facing the certainty of her father's departure. As that realization swept over her, she crept up to a pine tree, and leaning against its base, searched feverishly for some way to go on.

The château! That was a part of the line of defense, and to pass through it would be to pass the trenches. However full of unknown perils it might be, she thought she could face them better there than in this gloomy and terrifying wood.



## ACROSS THE LINES

But here difficulties again confronted her. Was the château inhabited? She had seen no lights, but surely the sentries would be likely to take refuge in it from the storm. Could she possibly get through that great building unseen, since not a step of the way would be familiar? But think as she would no other solution came to her. Even in her dark dress she dared not try to cross the open lawns. The wind was bending the pliant pine boughs in every direction, and some of them struck against her as she rose to her feet and started back the way she had come. In a few minutes she paused uncertainly, for she no longer felt the path beneath her feet. Fearful of completely losing her way, she turned directly toward the château and presently came out at the edge of the lawn not far from the avenue. The château was approached by a drive winding up the gentler slope on the side of the hill toward the town. This road became the pine-bordered avenue that ran over the lawns, offering Lucy shelter from near where she stood to the terrace at the rear of the building.

A flash of lightning cut through the dark clouds as she reached the avenue. By that flash she saw the road stretching empty before her. She began running, oblivious to prowling sentries, the only sounds in her ears the sigh of the swaying branches on each side and the distant rumbling thunder. In



## CAPTAIN LUCY IN FRANCE

five minutes she stopped, panting, a few yards from the terrace at the back of the château. Long French windows opened on to it, but their glass had long ago been shattered, and in the wind the neglected shutters were banging to and fro. Lucy stole up the steps of the terrace, and, approaching one of the windows, flattened herself against the wall and glanced back about the lawns and gardens. By the lake the sentry was still pacing. She could see the faint gleam of his bayonet as he moved. But he had not discovered her. No other sentry was in sight, so far as she could pierce the shadows. She turned to the window and peeped cautiously through. Darkness reigned within, and the wind, whistling through the rooms, made the heavy hangings against the walls flap like sails in a storm. With a quick sigh that was something like a gasp at thought of the unknown dangers before her, Lucy stepped through the window, shrinking from the jagged edges of the broken glass that caught at her hands and clothing.

Inside, she stopped for a second, making sure of her direction, then moved on through the room, feeling every step of the way and more than once narrowly avoiding a collision with some piece of furniture in her path. She reached the opposite side and saw an open doorway leading onward. Beyond it was a large hall or drawing-room, for at



## ACROSS THE LINES

the far end were windows, and the lightning playing against them showed the vast interior, filled with the débris of broken furniture, but quite deserted. Enormously relieved, Lucy started quickly forward, urged by a rising hope of success. In her impulsive haste she ran full against a stool or small table. Startled, she sprang back, and the object, flung aside by her sudden movement, fell to the floor with a noise that echoed through the building. Almost with the sound a door was thrown open somewhat on her right. As she stood frozen to the spot with horror, a candle shone out of the darkness and a loud, commanding voice shouted, "Wilhelm! Wilhelm!"

Scarcely were the words spoken when Lucy, recovering her power of motion, fled across the room, glancing wildly about her for some way out. The windows in front were raised from the floor, and she dared not try to climb through one and risk showing herself against a glare of lightning. On her left she dimly saw an open doorway. With pounding heart she darted to it, and, arms outstretched before her, passed through the opening, down a corridor, and found herself before an arched entrance lighted by a faint red glow.

The room beyond, into which she ran, mortal fear of what lay behind driving her on, was huge and lofty, with narrow, pointed windows whose



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leaded panes were imitated in the glass doors of the countless bookcases which lined the walls. The fire which gave light to see burned faintly in a massive marble chimney-place and was mostly fed by some of the priceless books torn from these very shelves. Before the chimney were several pots and kettles, and other evidences that the fire was used by the sentries to cook their food, since an abundance of fuel lay close at hand in the thousands of volumes the library contained. They were strewn all over the polished floor, and Lucy stumbled over them as she stopped in the middle of the room, looking desperately around her for some place of concealment or escape.

There were no hangings on the walls and the bookcases seemed to offer no safe hiding-place. She approached the chimney, with a vague idea of crouching behind its shadowy columns. By the flickering firelight the motto cut into the marble caught her eyes: *En avant pour le droit*.

But now, hearing no sound of pursuit, her terrified mind regained a little power of thought. She stole over toward the windows on the right, one of which was entirely shattered. Fearful of listening ears she moved with infinite caution, and reaching the window, stood aside from it to peer out on to the terrace and lawns in front of the château. A clearing had been cut in the trees that crowned the





SHE APPROACHED THE CHIMNEY







## ACROSS THE LINES

hilltop, to open a view of the valley below. Just now the trees were only dark blotches framing a stormy sky. Lucy drew back after one swift glance. A sentry was walking across the lawn beyond the terrace. Struggling with the confusion that began to take possession of her, she looked toward the windows at the far end of the room. At that moment heavy footsteps sounded in the corridor, with the gruff murmur of conversation between two advancing men. Then the voice from which she had fled, raised more angrily than before against the increasing noise of the wind, shouted:

“Wilhelm! Wilhelm! Sehen sie!”

There were no two ways open. As the Germans entered the library Lucy slipped through the broken window, and dropping on her hands and knees, crawled along the stone terrace, over a broad parapet of sand-bags rising in her way, until she reached the lawn. That voice had been heard beyond the château walls, for as, shaking with fear, she looked back to where the sentry paced, she saw the man running up the steps of the terrace toward the library windows. Without waiting for more she rose to her feet and ran like a deer to the crest of the hill, where it sloped down to the valley. She was well ahead of the precipitous rocks down which Captain Beattie had planned his descent. She made for the gentler declivity in front, dodging about a big



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raised platform that was a German gun-emplacment. As she crossed the clearing, which opened like a little amphitheatre in the woody hillside, a marble summer-house set in the centre, big rain-drops began to fall. Lightning glared from the heavy storm-clouds and the rumbling thunder was succeeded by a tremendous peal. Then the pine trees swallowed her up, and she began to feel her way among the trunks, which bent and groaned about her in the fierce gusts of wind.

Whether the front of the hill was guarded below the crest Lucy had no idea. Even had she known there were sentries about her she could have done nothing else than press on, panting, in the windy darkness, the growing downpour of rain penetrating the branches and striking on her head and shoulders. Now and again the lightning shone on her path, revealing the rough, wet trunks and writhing green boughs around her, and the thunder, crashing overhead, drowned the incessant noise of the wind and rain. The storm had become the only enemy against which she struggled as, step by step, she fought her way down the slope. At last, when a strong blast of wind showed her she was nearing the open, a flash of lightning disclosed the gleaming wet swamp and the level ground around it at the base of the hill.

Beneath the last pine tree Lucy flung herself



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on the ground to catch her breath. She was drenched from head to foot. With wet fingers she felt inside her dress to see that Captain Beattie's precious paper was safely held in its scrap of canvas and protecting handkerchief. Reassured, she pushed her dripping hair from her face and stared out over the swamp. She knew that great obstacles were still before her. But she had burned her bridges. To retreat through the château was unthinkable.

In a few minutes the rain and wind began to diminish, and the clouds overhead parted, turning from black to gray. The lightning became less frequent and the thunder sank to a sullen muttering. Lucy studied the sky with deep anxiety. She was eager to have the lightning cease, but knowing the uncertainty of summer storms, she dreaded lest the clouds should drift entirely by and the moon appear, while she was still before the enemy's eyes. There was no time to lose, and she had begun to fear that Wilhelm's master might put the men in the trenches on guard against the unknown intruder. She sprang up and stepped out on level ground, and into the spongy, yielding earth at the border of the marsh.

She knew that the trenches were close behind on her left, and a shiver ran through her as her foot withdrew from the soaked ground with a loud



## *CAPTAIN LUCY IN FRANCE*

squelching noise. On a quiet night any sound might have reached her from where the soldiers watched behind their defenses, but in the rumbling thunder and the gusts of wind blowing away the last of the rain she heard no sign of their presence. The reedy grass came above her waist as she stooped forward, feeling her way along the precarious footing, every nerve and muscle on the alert to receive the warning of danger. An occasional backward glance at the château towers rising above the gloom of the hill was her only guide, for the plain stretched dimly in front until it was lost in obscurity. Suddenly, with a frightened squawk, a big marsh-bird rose with flapping wings from under her very feet. With loud cries at such unexpected disturbance it fluttered over her head, and only settled down once more when she had been reduced to abject terror. Whether the keen ears behind her became suspicious at the bird's alarm, or whether the quieting of the storm made sounds more clearly audible, Lucy at that moment heard a voice.

It came from the trenches, but what it said or ordered she had no idea. It gave strength and speed to her tired and trembling limbs, so that she fled on across the marsh nearly as fast as though she were on dry and level ground. Her ankles ached unbearably, and her beating heart hammered



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against her ribs when she stumbled on to a little ridge of grassy ground just beyond the swampy bottom. With stooping shoulders and head bent down she had no chance to see ahead. Now she looked up and saw the dull gleam of water only a few yards in front. With a sigh of utter weariness she dropped to the wet earth and lay motionless.

A bright glow reflected in the waters of the pond made her start up. She thought of lightning, but one glance showed her the graceful, rocket-like form of a star-shell falling across the sky. It came from the Allies' lines. The French and Americans were on the watch for any surprise attempted under cover of the cloudy darkness. Lucy sank back to earth, a bitter reproach in her heart for this friendly weapon discharged against her. The light sputtered out, and with the return of darkness she sat up and struggled for courage to go on. She drew Captain Beattie's message from inside her dress and tied the handkerchief around her forehead like a close-fitting bandage. She felt doubtfully of her rubber soled sneakers, and deciding they were too light to impede her progress, crept forward to the edge of the pond.

At that moment a sound which she had heard a second before and wondered at was unmistakably repeated. The Germans in the trenches were re-



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plying to the star-shell with a scattering fire. The shots were few and far apart, but Lucy heard one bullet sing over her head, and that was enough. There is a courage that comes with desperation, and it was this which caused her to crawl instantly forward into the lake and strike out across it.

The cool water brought a welcome sense of refreshment and cleared her whirling mind a little. She swam on strongly, trying hard to make no sound and to keep her arms beneath the surface, and searching the sky with frightened eyes, dreading to see another star-shell flaring up. She heard no more shots behind her, and this brought back a little hope. She struggled to keep the stroke even, and not to hurry it, for the pond was at least one hundred feet across, and she was burdened by her clothing. But to swim slowly and calmly was too much for her. She could not resist bursts of speed as, from the darkness behind, her straining ears imagined every sort of approaching peril. When at last she neared the opposite bank, her breath was coming in painful gasps and she was dangerously near exhaustion. With a few more frenzied strokes she managed to get within her depth, and in another moment crawled weakly out on to the grassy field beyond.

She lay there on her back, a prayer of thankfulness on her lips, though, as she untied the handker-



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chief from about her head, she watched the sky with fresh anxiety. The clouds were rapidly dispersing and a faint silvery gleam announced the moon's coming. She thought that in another quarter of an hour these level fields would be flooded with moonlight, and she, too far from either line to be closely distinguished, would be a target for both sides. But she had to have breath to move, and for five minutes longer she lay panting before she rose from the ground and began plodding wearily on, her body bent forward and her feet stumbling over the little grassy hummocks in her way. A line of dark objects, coming suddenly into view, gave her a sickening pang of fear. But as she crept up to them they proved to be only the stumps of what had been a row of trees bordering a field. It seemed to Lucy that she had struggled on for long miles through the darkness when all at once the moon shone out in cloudy radiance. With a gasp she stopped short, staring wildly before her. Not three hundred yards in front a tangle of posts and barbed wire extended before the Allies' trenches.

She was in plain sight, but at that moment even a bullet from her own countrymen seemed better than what she had fled from so long. She raised both arms above her head and walked straight on toward the edge of the barbed wire, behind which showed the sand-bagged parapet of the trenches.



## CAPTAIN LUCY IN FRANCE

Rifle barrels glinted over the top and a helmeted head popped into sight.

"F-friend!" stammered Lucy, her scared little voice sounding strangely out of the night. "Don't shoot! I'm an American!"

"It's a woman—it's a girl!" cried an astonished voice.

A dozen heads were raised above the trench, a murmur of voices filled the air, and the next instant two soldiers had sprung over the top and were running toward her. The first caught her by the arm and drew her swiftly toward the trenches, saying:

"Through this way—here's a lane in the wire!"

"But where on earth do you come from?" demanded the second, slipping between her and the distant German lines.

"Just follow on now, as quick as you can!" urged her guide.

Lucy hardly heard them. She knew that she was led safely through the wire, and that strong arms lifted her down inside the American lines.

For a minute she was near to fainting, but the triumph filling her heart cleared her brain and overcame her exhaustion. A light flashed in front of her, and some one held a cup of water to her lips as she sat on the fire-step of the trench and leaned panting against the parapet. A dozen soldiers had



## ACROSS THE LINES

crowded around her, expressing every degree of pity, wonder and admiration. The next moment the light revealed a sergeant hurrying along the trench, with an officer following.

"Here she is, Lieutenant," said the sergeant as they stopped at Lucy's side.

The lantern raised above Lucy's head illumined her figure, as, disheveled and drenching wet, she sat on the muddy fire-step. The young officer's astonished face was on a level with hers as he sank down beside her, asking hurriedly:

"You're an American? What on earth were you doing out there in front of our lines?"

"In front of ——?" Lucy repeated faintly. "Why, I came from behind the German lines—I came from Château-Plessis."

"From Château ——" The lieutenant's words were lost in a cheer that rang out deafeningly between the trench's narrow walls. Helmets were frantically waved in the air, and a dozen hands were held out for Lucy's grasp by the eager listeners about her. She felt her face flush hot and her heart bound with happiness. It was true—she had succeeded! It was hard to realize.

"She crossed the German lines!"

"That girl—all alone!"

"Be still—the Lieutenant wants to talk to her."

The murmur died away as the officer, no less



## CAPTAIN LUCY IN FRANCE

enthusiastic than his men at that moment, inquired once more:

“ You got over here from inside the town without being seen? You deserve a war medal! What were you doing in Château-Plessis? ”

“ My father is there a prisoner. He’s Colonel Gordon. I had to come,” Lucy answered, still breathless and somewhat incoherent. Then she started forward from where she had leaned wearily against the supporting timbers of the trench, saying earnestly, “ I can’t tell you the rest now. Where is the divisional commander? Will you take me to him? I have news for him that mustn’t wait any longer, and I am afraid he is a long way from here.”

“ No—General Clinton is at a farm only five miles behind us—between here and Cantigny. He has been inspecting along the line. Of course you may see him,” the lieutenant added, rather puzzled, “ but must it be at once? You look used up, and the trip will be pretty uncomfortable after all this rain. The roads are a sea of mud—not to mention a walk through the trenches.”

Mud—discomfort—Lucy almost laughed aloud at his words. She had seen a good deal of both that night, and what were they compared to the anguish of mind she had borne in the past weeks? She could endure any hardships now with this glorious hope flooding her heart.



## ACROSS THE LINES

"I don't mind how bad it is," she said quickly. "I only want to see the General as soon as I can."

The young officer read the clear, eager purpose in her eyes and gave a nod of consent. At his order a soldier led the way with alacrity, lantern in hand, along the trench. Lucy rose and followed, and the lieutenant came behind her, after stopping for a word with the sergeant.

"We have half a mile to walk," he told Lucy, pointing ahead along the mud and water of the trench bottom.

She nodded, undismayed. The line of men standing behind their rifles at the parapet, of whom many turned to her with looks of astonishment and eager friendliness, were but dim figures that seemed a half-waking dream. "They're Americans. I'm with Americans," she repeated to herself, and the joy welling up at the thought made her almost dizzy as she trudged along the wet, slippery path.

It is at such moments that physical discomfort is hardly felt and, weary though she was, Lucy did not suffer greatly during the long hour's journey. The tramp through the trenches was followed by a ride in the bottom of a motor-truck, along a dark road that the rain had transformed into a bog. The three passengers were flung from side to side as the heavy wheels struggled through the ruts, or



## *CAPTAIN LUCY IN FRANCE*

careened into the deep gullies. The laboring motor stalled and missed fire, and the moon, hidden again behind a cloud, gave no light now when it was so sorely needed.

At last the truck reached drier ground, and stopped before a lighted house in the middle of a grassy meadow. Mud-splashed and bruised from the terrific jolting, Lucy was helped down, and the young officer took hold of her arm and led her inside the door. In the little hallway he left her to speak with an orderly, who preceded him to an adjoining room. Lucy heard murmurs of conversation and, beyond the doorway, saw a second officer standing, with papers in his hand. She took out the handkerchief from inside her dress, making also a futile effort to smooth her hair, which, drying during the long ride, had begun to curl in a tangled mass about her head. In another moment the young lieutenant who had brought her returned, saying:

“Come right in, the General will see you.”

Lucy followed him into the anteroom, whose farther door the other officer was holding open.

Beyond it a broad-shouldered man with iron-gray hair was seated at a big desk under the electric light. His face was turned toward the door, and as Lucy entered he rose sharply to his feet, saying with quick earnestness, “You are Colonel James



## ACROSS THE LINES

Gordon's daughter? You came from Château-Plessis?"

He put his hands on Lucy's shoulders, fixing his eyes on hers.

"Yes, General," Lucy answered with trembling eagerness. "I am Lucy Gordon. I have been in Château-Plessis since before the Germans took it. My father is there still."

"You got through the enemy lines—you crossed over to us alone?" the General insisted, his glance softening with pity and wonder as he surveyed Lucy's mud-stained and bedraggled figure, and the shining, eager eyes in her tired face.

"Yes, I did; I had to. They are going to send Father into Germany, and I couldn't stay there and do nothing, when I thought I had a chance to save him."

"You have courage enough for anything! What can we do, though, poor child—unless they will delay your father's going for some days longer? But tell me how on earth you got over here!"

"I brought you something that I know will help," Lucy persisted, and with shaking fingers she unfolded her handkerchief and laid the precious slip of paper in General Clinton's hands. "A British officer who is a prisoner in Château-Plessis gave me this. He was captured at Argenton, and



## CAPTAIN LUCY IN FRANCE

that drawing shows what he learned of the defenses."

"The defenses of Argenton?" As the General spoke he sat down at his desk with the paper quickly spread before him, and the two young officers with one accord sprang to his side.

"The road is the fortified ridge. The soldiers are the batteries. He explained it to me," said Lucy, breathing fast.

The General wheeled about in his chair and looked at her with a new light in his eyes. "You've done us a good turn, my little girl!" he exclaimed, and reaching for Lucy's hand he took it in a strong clasp. "You are of the sort that will bring victory to America, and I'm proud of you!"

Lucy's heart was too full for words and her eyes filled up with sudden, smarting tears. The two junior officers, seeing her emotion, checked and cut short the burst of generous praise that rushed to their lips.

Almost at once the General continued, "I must question you in detail before any use can be made of this plan. Also, I must hear how you got out of the town. But first I will let you dry your clothes and rest a little. You have done enough for one night."

Lucy raised her head, dashing the tears from her eyes. "I can answer any questions now, General



## ACROSS THE LINES

Clinton," she said quickly. "Do you think I have come all this hard way, and almost died of fear, to go and rest before telling you all I can? Don't think of me, or anything but learning what you want to know."

Her firm, earnest voice, and the steady light in her eyes carried reassurance and conviction. General Clinton gave a nod of satisfaction, and his voice, as he ordered Lucy to take a seat beside him, told her that her answers would hold a new weight and value in his mind.

"My only fear," he began, "in trusting to this plan you have brought is that you may have been deceived by some sharp-witted German knave. Who was this officer who gave you the information?"

"Captain Archibald Beattie of the Royal Infantry. He is a prisoner in Château-Plessis."

"Wheeler," said the General, turning to his aide, "where is that British liaison officer who was with us to-day? Could you get hold of him?"

"Yes, sir, he is right in the other farm building," said the aide, saluting.

"Find one of our machine-gun officers, too," the General added as the lieutenant turned to leave, "Where did you see this Englishman?" he continued, facing Lucy once more.

"The first time was when a German officer made



## CAPTAIN LUCY IN FRANCE

me interpret for him what Captain Beattie said, because I speak a little German. After he was in the old town prison I used to see him through the bars of his window. He gave me this plan in case I should ever be able to send it to our lines. I missed two chances in succession, so there was no way but to come myself."

"What chances could you have had?"

"My brother Bob landed in Château-Plessis once, but that was before I knew about the hidden guns at Argenton. Then a French spy got into the town, but I failed that time, too."

"Here they are, sir," said the other lieutenant, going toward the door.

Steps sounded outside and crossed the outer room. The aide reappeared, with two officers behind him. One was a tall, handsome Britisher about thirty years old, whose face was so strangely familiar to Lucy that she stared at him wonderingly as his hand rose to the salute. But the impression passed, for he bowed to her without recognition. Before the General had more than spoken a word of greeting, the second officer entered the room and stood at attention. Then at sight of Lucy he gave a gasp of such surprise as almost caused him to forget the General's presence.

"Lucy! Lucy Gordon! You are free!" he cried.



## ACROSS THE LINES

The General looked up sharply. "You know her then? And you, Miss Gordon?"

For Lucy had leaped to her feet to hold out both hands to the young officer, her face all lighted up with joyful recognition.

"Oh, yes, General," she stammered, struggling for words in her happiness at sight of this long-lost friend, "it's Captain Harding!"

"Well, Captain Harding, I congratulate you on your friend," said the General with a kindly smile. "This young lady crossed the German lines to bring us this plan of the Argenton defenses. I will ask you two gentlemen to give me your opinion on it."

Making a respectful effort to hide his astonishment, and to silence his unbounded admiration, Captain Harding bent, together with the British officer, over the little paper on the General's desk.

"Now, Miss Gordon, please tell us again about that British officer who gave you this plan," the General commanded.

"He is Captain Archibald Beattie, Royal Infantry, captured at Argenton on May 17th," Lucy repeated.

"Beattie—Archibald Beattie!" exclaimed the British liaison officer. "I know him, General; he is a prisoner now."

"Yes, in Château-Plessis," Lucy nodded. "He



## CAPTAIN LUCY IN FRANCE

is young—about twenty-one—with light brown hair and blue eyes, and a little scar on his forehead.”

“Just so! He got that scar from a grazing bullet at Ypres. If this plan is from him, sir, it’s trustworthy. Why, that’s his writing at the bottom, ‘Changing the guard’!” The Britisher’s calm face had grown flushed with excitement. “Then the group of men must represent batteries?”

“Yes, so he told this young lady. What part of the ridge would that be, Harding?”

“The west front, sir, where the concealed batteries are. The main front!” Captain Harding exclaimed, overcome with joy. “Oh, sir, we should be able to silence those guns now!”

His hand, behind the General’s back, came down on Lucy’s shoulder with a pressure that would have been painful if its friendly and delightful meaning had not increased her happiness. “Oh, but you’ve done a good piece of work, Captain Lucy! I always knew you had it in you,” he whispered.

“Next week—the attack we had planned ——” the General was saying.

Forgetting herself, Lucy interrupted him. “Oh, not next week, General! Right away! My father will be sent into Germany day after to-morrow.”

The General swung around in his chair and looked at her with keen, thoughtful eyes. “I can’t make



## ACROSS THE LINES

promises," he said at last. "But if any one has deserved to have her father saved it is you. And the army cannot afford to lose Colonel Gordon if there's a chance of reaching him. Tell us what else you know."

"I can tell you the weakest point in the line before Château-Plessis. Captain Beattie and I heard two German soldiers talking about it outside his prison window. But he knew it before anyway. It was there that I got through."

"Wheeler, bring that scale map and put it on the desk," ordered the General. "Gentlemen, draw up, and Miss Gordon will show us just exactly where she crossed the lines."

The British officer, rising to obey this invitation, held out his hand to Lucy as he neared the desk. His face had in it something more than a friendly admiration for her brave exploit.

"I want to congratulate you myself, Lucy Gordon," he said. "I'm your cousin. I'm Janet's brother, Arthur Leslie."



## CHAPTER XVI

### THE YANKS ARE COMING

AT daybreak of the morning following Lucy's departure from Château-Plessis Colonel Gordon awoke to the boom of cannon. He raised his head, listening intently. In a moment he was aware that the fighting had recommenced along the whole front. He guessed that the bombardment extended from Argenton as far south as Cantigny, though as yet the lines in front of Château-Plessis were quiet enough. He rose and dressed and went out into the garden.

The sentry glanced at him with a look of surprise and annoyance, for he was not the only one who had been roused by the guns. Several of the convalescents were strolling about the garden, though in the faint light of a foggy dawn Colonel Gordon could distinguish them but vaguely. Neither could he see the sky beyond the town, but the fog could not prevent his hearing, and his ears told him much. The bombardment was steadily increasing. The German artillery in front of



## THE YANKS ARE COMING

Château-Plessis had gone into action now, and the vibrations of the powerful explosions began to shake the air. From the distant boom of the guns before Argenton to the crash of those but a mile away, the mighty volume of sound rolled ever increasingly on the listeners' ears.

As Colonel Gordon stood motionless by the garden wall, the figure of a French officer advanced out of the fog and came to his side.

"Good-morning, Colonel," said his fellow prisoner, and in the Frenchman's voice Colonel Gordon detected something of the longing hope that was stirring his own heart. "What do you think of it? It sounds as if they were in earnest."

He spoke very low, and Colonel Gordon answered him as softly, "It is evident that the Allies began the attack. I'm sure the firing commenced from our own lines. The German batteries in front of the town have but just come in."

"The attack appears to be developing on our flanks—Château-Plessis is not directly menaced yet. I fear it could not be held, even if taken, while the enemy holds Argenton." The Frenchman's eager voice had grown more anxious than hopeful as the situation grew clearer to his mind.

"That is probable enough," Colonel Gordon muttered thoughtfully, "but, Captain Remy, I



## *CAPTAIN LUCY IN FRANCE*

think the Americans are opposite us, and they are not likely to attempt an advance over this unknown terrain without good hope of success."

Colonel Gordon was not at heart quite as confident as he appeared, as the Frenchman easily recognized, but both men knew the value of a little optimism, and Captain Remy allowed himself to be somewhat encouraged. In fact, notwithstanding the obstacle of Argenton's formidable defenses, the thought of that American army about to strike with all the ardor of its growing strength and determination was cause for hope and even for confidence.

An hour passed while the two officers stood there, listening in silence, and occasionally exchanging a few words. When a German orderly came to call them back to the hospital they left reluctantly. The crash of the guns was the only sound they cared to hear just then, and the only sight their eyes looked for the dark puffs of bursting shells in the sky beyond the town, from which the fog had begun to clear away.

Inside the hospital Colonel Gordon caught sight of Elizabeth and stopped the German woman on her hurried way across the ward. "Where is Lucy, Elizabeth?" he asked. "She is usually here before this time."

Elizabeth's face was flushed and troubled, and her hands began clasping each other nervously.



## THE RANKS ARE COMING

Colonel Gordon thought he guessed the reason for her uneasiness. Convinced as he was of his old servant's loyalty to the Allies' cause he could not but suppose that her feelings would undergo some conflict on the eve of another fight.

Elizabeth stammered a little as she answered, "Miss Lucy not yet is here, Colonel. She told me I should say to you that she will before very long see you."

This vague reply satisfied Colonel Gordon for the moment, and he went in to breakfast, still deeply thoughtful over the commencing battle. It was easy to see that every one in the hospital shared his preoccupation. The Americans and their allies listened to the roaring cannon with eager, intent faces. Between patients and nurses many a hopeful word or meaning glance was exchanged, in spite of German doctors and orderlies near by. These seemed not to share in the keen interest the others showed. They looked sullen, anxious and ill-tempered. Many a poor French or American soldier was roughly handled that morning by a German orderly who saw a chance to vent his smouldering resentment. By no stretch of imagination could any German in Château-Plessis see a cheerful prospect ahead. When the French and British had exacted from them such a fearful toll during the progress of Germany's victorious spring offensive,



## CAPTAIN LUCY IN FRANCE

what would the price be now that America had joined the ranks of the Allies?

The bombardment had grown heavy and continuous all along the line. Colonel Gordon presently started back to the garden, but was prevented by the sentry on the path outside, who shook his head scowlingly, with upraised rifle. Surprised at this sudden change of front, Colonel Gordon went back to his room and looked out of the main window toward the west. The sky was filled with darting airplanes, and bursting shrapnel formed countless dark spots among the white clouds beyond the town. As he looked, the scream of a shell drowned for a moment every other sound. The next instant, with a terrific explosion, a jet of earth and stone rose into the air not five hundred yards distant, leaving a gaping hole in the street leading westward from the hospital.

Colonel Gordon turned to the door of the room, and catching sight of Miss Pearse, motioned quickly to her. The big ward had suddenly taken on a look of excitement and confusion. A German doctor was loudly issuing orders right and left. Miss Pearse ran to Colonel Gordon's side, her face reflecting the emotions that filled her heart almost to bursting at that moment. Colonel Gordon gave her no time to speak before he asked sharply:

“Where is Lucy? Why isn't she here?”



## THE YANKS ARE COMING

Miss Pearse gave a quick sigh, as though she had nearly reached the limit of endurance. She drew Colonel Gordon back into the room, and said with what calmness she could muster:

“I will have to tell you, Colonel, and I can’t take long to do it. I hope and believe that Lucy is safely inside the Allies’ lines.”

“Where? What?” gasped Colonel Gordon, stupefied.

Miss Pearse took Lucy’s note from her apron pocket and put it in his hands. “That will tell you all I know,” she said.

With trembling fingers Colonel Gordon held the slip of paper to the light and read the following, in a hurried, blotted likeness of Lucy’s writing:

“DEAR MISS PEARSE: I am going to try to cross the German lines to-night, to take Captain Beattie’s plan to the Allies. I cannot stay here and see Father sent to Germany. I know a way—by the château hill—where perhaps I can get through. If I succeed I will beg the American commander to attack at once. Pray that he can. I wrote Elizabeth not to let Father know sooner than can be helped. You, too, please, don’t tell him before to-morrow. LUCY.”

Colonel Gordon could not find breath to speak. As he stood staring at Miss Pearse in horror and



## *CAPTAIN LUCY IN FRANCE*

amazement, the young nurse cried in an agony of longing:

“ Oh, Colonel Gordon, if only the Allies could take the town to-day! The Germans have given orders to evacuate the hospitals. They are taking out the German patients now, and in another hour the rest must follow.” Her voice shook and her eyes filled with tears as they met his with a look of almost hopeless misery, but in the same moment she wiped the tears away and turned back to the ward to resume her share of the tremendous task.

Colonel Gordon stood motionless where she had left him. Then, his thoughts a little collected, he glanced sharply out into the hurry and movement of the ward, where the work of evacuation had begun. He sprang toward the window once more, trying to learn something of the battle's progress amidst the roar of the artillery. A German regiment was running along the street toward the west, making its utmost speed among the impeding stones and rubbish. The shells no longer fell near by. He could hear them screaming over the town, but they fell short of the centre, avoiding the hospitals and searching out the German main headquarters and supply depot, behind the trenches. He thought the two airplanes circling far overhead were accountable for this change. The sentry had deserted the garden to help in the interior of the hospital.



## *THE YANKS ARE COMING*

Motor-lorries and ambulances were drawn up outside the doors, and the German wounded had begun to be carried out.

Colonel Gordon entered the ward, and finding himself unobserved in the general confusion, went out into the garden, and from there to the street beyond. The regiment had passed, and the street was deserted. He glanced back and saw that the angle of the hospital wall hid him from the group about the ambulances. He drew a long breath and began to run in the direction of the firing.

Not far from the street which Lucy had followed to the château hill the night before he stopped, breathing a little hard after his enforced idleness of the past weeks. The chief reason for his pause, however, was the change in the noise of the attack which became distinguishable to his ears as he drew nearer. The rat-tat-tat of machine guns and rifle fire was plainly audible in the midst of the bombardment. It came from his left, the direction of the hill. He ran forward again until between the houses he could obtain a distant view of the hillside.

The fog had now lifted from all but the lowlands, and at the sight which met his eyes he gave a shout of amazement and exultation. All over the hill-tops behind the château khaki-clad men were advancing in skirmish line. Now they ran on a few



## CAPTAIN LUCY IN FRANCE

steps, now dropped to earth or fell back before a sudden onset from the enemy concealed in the woods in front of them, while the bursting flame from machine guns, the volleys of musketry fire, and the gaps opening in the thinning ranks announced a bitter and desperate struggle. It could mean but one thing. The German line still held before Château-Plessis, but at this, the extreme southern point of the town, it had been broken by a bold surprise. Colonel Gordon stood staring toward the hill, convincing himself of the truth of what he saw. While his heart throbbed with triumph, every nerve in his body rebelled at remaining an idle spectator to that thrilling and unequal conflict. Barely two companies of Americans had breasted the hill from the swampy land below, and they had all they could do to hold their own. At that moment he heard the thud of footsteps behind him and glanced quickly back. A German infantry column, making double-time toward the front, was debouching from a street on his right.

The foremost officer gave one look at the uniformed American and sent a shot from his pistol at Colonel Gordon's breast. The bullet whizzed by his shoulder, and a second kicked up the dust behind him. For he did not wait to furnish a target to the German captain. Those shots more than anything else added to the strength and ardor of his purpose.



## *THE TANKS ARE COMING*

The German thought him a combatant, and a combatant he was from that instant.

He had slipped around the corner of the church at the head of the street leading to the hill. Once out of sight of his enemy, who was leading his men on too desperate an errand to turn aside in pursuit, he ran on until the road sloped upward. The American shells had penetrated this far before the infantry had advanced to climb the hillside under cover of the fog. Right before him gaped a huge shell-hole, whose flying earth had partly concealed a shattered German machine gun, with the crew lying dead beside it. Colonel Gordon bent over one of the dead soldiers, seized the pistol from his holster and unbuckled his cartridge-belt. In another second he stood up, no longer unarmed and defenseless. With every pulse on fire, though his brain remained keen and watchful, he ran on toward the hill.

To skirt its northern side would be to run full into the German trenches. Any way was perilous enough, but he was thoroughly familiar with the ground. It was the same over which he had advanced six weeks before to victory. He could not linger at the base of the hill either, where bodies of troops might be met with at any moment. Just now he saw only a straggling group of women and children fleeing from a near-by cottage toward the



## *CAPTAIN LUCY IN FRANCE*

town. He plunged into the wood and began mounting the hill among the thick growth of pines, while above him increased the hammer of machine-gun fire, the rattle of musketry and the shouts of furious men. The hillside up which he climbed was deserted. The Germans had gone to the defense of the position by way of the trenches, and, though already driven back to seek cover in the woods, they had not yet retreated down the slope.

As he neared the crest, Colonel Gordon crept cautiously up behind a rock which overhung the hillside, and, breathing fast, crouched low to peer out from its concealing shelter. Directly in front of him, about twenty yards away, gray-clad soldiers were falling back in disorder, though firing as they retired. In a moment they were almost at the rock's level, and now the Americans burst out from the lingering fog wreaths among the pines, pursuing the demoralized foe at the point of the bayonet. Colonel Gordon started up from the ground, victory the one thought in his exultant heart. At that instant a sharp command rang out from the trees on his right. Before it died away a heavy rifle-fire was discharged on the flank of the advancing Americans, a dozen of whom fell forward in the midst of their triumphant charge. He knew in a second what had happened. German reinforcements had crept up by the road which wound about



## *THE YANKS ARE COMING*

the hillside. The swift retreat of the Germans defending the hill was playing into the very hands of these newcomers, who had the surprised Americans for the moment at their mercy.

An American soldier, pitching forward as he fell, rolled down to the rock close by Colonel Gordon's side. He was already dead. Colonel Gordon saw the gaping wound in his temple, and in the same glance he read the number on his insignia. These men were from his own regiment! In that breath of time that he had remained inactive his mind had been desperately planning how to make the most of the help he could offer. Now he hesitated no longer.

A captain, frantically trying to rally his men to withstand the flank attack of twice their own number, fell dead in the act of urging on his company. Their leader shot down, a murderous fire cutting their ranks to pieces, for an instant the men wavered. At that moment there appeared in front of them the tall figure of an officer, bareheaded, a pistol in his upraised hand. There was no time to express any of the emotions which seized the soldiers' bewildered minds at sight of their lost commander. A bullet struck Colonel Gordon in the arm, but he did not feel it. His voice, ringing out clear, strong and confident, in the midst of death and confusion, cried:



## CAPTAIN LUCY IN FRANCE

“Forward, men of the 39th! Follow me!”

It was all they needed. What were overwhelming odds with that familiar figure leading them to victory? A cheer that shook the enemy's sense of easy triumph burst from their panting throats. Colonel Gordon was no longer alone, for the whole company had sprung to his side. A solid volley met the German attack, and then in the face of a rain of bullets, the Americans charged.

The Germans saw that hedge of bayonets rushing down upon them, and commenced to give way a little. Trained fighters as they were they could not stand before that onslaught. Leaping down the slope, between the trees and over rocks and brushwood, the Americans came irresistibly on. The Germans, retiring faster now, scowled in sullen rage at this enemy who advanced shouting, against such withering fire, their eyes aflame with the eager light of victory.

As they neared the foot of the hill the German fire had almost ceased. Hand to hand the men of the 39th and their enemy continued the bitter struggle. Now more Americans had reached the hill-crest from the château and, while some remained to lend aid to those men of the 39th who had fought as rear-guard, others came bounding down the hill. Their help was welcome, but the fight was already won. A hundred survivors of



## THE YANKS ARE COMING

the two hundred men who had followed Colonel Gordon down the hill faced the shattered remnant of the German reinforcing column. Those of the enemy who managed to escape alive or uncaptured fled into the town, through which, at news of the broken line, the German troops from the trenches in front of Château-Plessis could be seen retreating in disorder. Two officers, reaching Colonel Gordon's side, seized hold of him and cried inaudible words of astonishment and joy through the rattle of musketry and the shouts around them. But their faces spoke plainly enough. One thing Colonel Gordon knew in that glorious moment, even before the silencing of the artillery fire confirmed it. Château-Plessis was in the hands of the Allies.

The American regiments now poured unimpeded down the hillside road, hoping to take the fleeing Germans on the flank or rear. A thought struck Colonel Gordon in the midst of his joy. To a signal officer pausing beside him, the vanguard of the new communication lines, he asked hurriedly:

"Can we hold the town, Major? It's a regular pocket. How far does our advance extend?"

"Can we hold it?" repeated the officer with triumph in his voice. "Colonel, we entered Argenton an hour ago!"

Before passing on he pointed to Colonel Gordon's



## CAPTAIN LUCY IN FRANCE

left sleeve. It was stained with blood, and the elder officer, noticing for the first time his wounded arm, found that it hung powerless by his side.

Lucy and her mother were in the little hospital at Cantigny when the news reached them. Lucy had been sent there by General Clinton to rest after her fatigue of the night before, and it was Captain Harding who had instantly sent word to Mrs. Gordon. At half-past nine the morning of the advance Mrs. Gordon reached Cantigny, and ten minutes later Lucy's arms were around her mother's neck, and all the suffering and anxiety of the past two months seemed to slip like a heavy burden from her shoulders. She was free and her mother was with her—no longer to be tormented with fears for her safety. After the first happy moments all their thoughts turned to Bob and Colonel Gordon and to the battle now raging, which would decide Château-Plessis' fate.

They had not long to spend in uncertainty, for that morning events moved quickly. Mrs. Gordon saw from the window a soldier running up the hospital steps.

"I wonder what news he has, Lucy," she said, her voice shaking with mingled hope and fear.

The next moment the door of the little room opened and a nurse, whose shining eyes and radiant



## THE TANKS ARE COMING

face spoke plainer than words, ran in and handed Mrs. Gordon a folded paper. "A soldier brought it," she explained, darting out again. "I haven't time to stop."

Mrs. Gordon unfolded the paper and together she and Lucy devoured the few pencil-scribbled lines:

"We have won! Argenton has fallen. Château-Plessis follows. R. H."

The guns were still thundering a few miles away, and at that distance neither Lucy nor her mother distinguished the slackening of the fire. They could not sit quietly any longer, and, going into the wards, they joined in the general rejoicing.

"Oh, Lucy, it's too good to be true!" Mrs. Gordon exclaimed a dozen times over. "Now if only I can see Bob and Father safe."

They went out into the streets of Cantigny, and it was in front of the brick house which was the Staff Headquarters in the town that Lucy caught sight of General Clinton. He was standing by a big military automobile, the door of which his aide, Lieutenant Wheeler, was holding open. At thought of what the General had done for her in trusting to Captain Beattie's plan and ordering the advance Lucy's eyes, as they were raised to his, filled up with quick, grateful tears. At that moment he turned and saw the young girl watching



## CAPTAIN LUCY IN FRANCE

him. He gave her one sharp glance and leaving the car came forward to her side. With a bow to Mrs. Gordon he held out his hand.

"Shake hands, Lucy Gordon," he said, his grave face lighting with keen satisfaction. "We've won, and your brave act made victory possible. Our troops occupy Argenton and Château-Plessis."

As Lucy, too overcome to speak, put her hand in his with burning cheeks and wildly beating heart, he turned quickly to his aide.

"Any empty seats in that other car, Wheeler? I know this girl and her mother are anxious to get to Château-Plessis."

"Yes, sir, there is plenty of room," responded the young officer with alacrity. He led the way to a second machine while the General stepped into his own before Lucy could find words to thank him.

It was almost noon when Lucy and her mother entered Château-Plessis. The automobiles of General Clinton's staff made a slow way among the soldiers and civilians crowding the once desolate streets in cheering throngs. The poor townspeople had robbed their little gardens to shower the victorious troops with lilacs and roses. Cries of friendly greeting filled the air on every side, and General Clinton advanced to joyful shouts of "*Vive l'Amérique! Vive nos libérateurs!*"



## THE YANKS ARE COMING

A shower of rose petals fell in Lucy's lap, and, gazing about her with wide, unbelieving eyes, she caught her breath in a quick sob. Too many feelings struggled in her heart for any connected thought. Most of all she longed to see her father and know that he was safe.

They neared the old town hall, no longer a hospital since the German evacuation, and bearing signs of their rage for destruction in the heaps of torn mattresses and broken furniture flung outside the doors into the street. American soldiers were hurriedly restoring things to order, for the Allies' wounded had been removed to the French hospital and here were to be General Clinton's headquarters for the time being.

Even before they drew up in front of the old building Lucy recognized some familiar faces among the group of officers gathered in the doorway. They had preceded the General from Cantigny to establish his headquarters, and now came forward to receive him. A few doctors and nurses, too, were among them. Lucy scanned each face with eager eyes, for Bob had flown into Château-Plessis immediately after the German retreat, in search of his father, and she and her mother waited to hear from him of Colonel Gordon's safety. Major Arthur Leslie was standing in the road, talking with a young British officer. Lucy's



## CAPTAIN LUCY IN FRANCE

throbbing heart gave a bound as she saw Captain Beattie's face. The look of cold defiance with which he had faced his captors—the bitter melancholy of his days in prison, had utterly vanished, and he looked like a happy boy as Arthur Leslie clapped him on the shoulder and shook his hands in joyful greeting. At that instant Lucy caught sight of Bob from behind a little group of men. The next, she sprang from the automobile and ran across the street. For Colonel Gordon, his left arm closely bandaged, was standing at Bob's side.

Five minutes later, when the Gordons had begun to realize the wonderful and happy truth that they were reunited, General Clinton made his way from among his aides to Colonel Gordon's side. He held out his hand to the wounded officer, glancing from one to the other of the faces before him with real sympathy in his shrewd, understanding eyes.

"I congratulate you on your gallant service," he said with simple directness. "It shall not be forgotten, Colonel—or rather General Gordon," he corrected. "Your son has no doubt told you that you were awarded that rank a month ago." In the same breath he turned to Bob with hand outstretched again. "You, too, deserve congratulation—more than I can offer you."



## THE RANKS ARE COMING

“What does he mean, Bob?” Lucy whispered, when General Clinton had turned to speak to Mrs. Gordon.

Bob had lost for a moment his dignity, and was looking flushed and boyish with so many eyes fixed upon him. “My promotion, I suppose,” he explained, a little huskily. “I’m a captain—or will be to-morrow.”

“But that’s not all,” interrupted Arthur Leslie, smiling at Bob’s confusion. “He hasn’t told you that he is recommended for decoration by both French and American commanders.”

Lucy thought her heart was too full for any more emotion, but the next minute she heard General Clinton saying:

“We expected your devoted service, General Gordon, and your son’s as well. But we had no claim on your daughter’s, yet she has given all she had of resourcefulness and bravery to the common cause. She deserves a reward as much as any soldier!”

Lucy could not have spoken a word in the midst of her happiness without bursting into childish tears. She wanted to explain Captain Beattie’s part in her success. More than anything she hoped the General understood how complete her reward was in seeing honors heaped upon those she loved so dearly.



## *CAPTAIN LUCY IN FRANCE*

“He’s right. It’s you who deserve it all,” Bob whispered in her ear.

Unable to stay quietly where she was, with such hot cheeks and pounding heart, she edged her way toward the door, when an officer had drawn General Clinton to one side.

Out in the street the cool air touched her face gratefully. At that moment she thought of Elizabeth, longing to see her again in this triumphant hour. To-day was Lucy’s fifteenth birthday, and Elizabeth, in the midst of their fears of the past weeks, had promised Lucy a present, in one of her kind efforts to cheer the anxious girl from her growing depression. Lucy eagerly questioned the people around her, but without avail.

“There’s not a German left in Château-Plessis,” Captain Harding told her, when she explained to him the object of her search. “Elizabeth must have gone on with the German wounded from the hospital. We advanced before they could force our own people to go.”

For a moment a cloud dimmed Lucy’s happiness. Was she not to see that faithful friend again after those dreadful weeks of captivity? Did Elizabeth mean to vanish from Château-Plessis, now that her work there was ended? Before she could answer her own doubts she caught sight of old Clemence,



## THE YANKS ARE COMING

standing with Michelle at the edge of the little crowd.

Michelle's eyes were raised to meet her own, and Lucy saw that the French girl's lovely face was transfigured, as Captain Beattie's had been, with the glad light of freedom. The look of scornful rebellion had left her eyes and the sad curve of her lips had changed to a serene smile of happiness. Lucy seized both her hands in a clasp that said more than the few halting words in which she tried to express their rejoicing.

Michelle had not managed to respond much, either, except with her shining eyes, when a wild cheer, rising on every side, caused the two girls to look quickly around. Caps were snatched off and flung in the air; the remaining flowers were pelted at the officers in the doorway by children shouting themselves hoarse in jubilation.

All eyes were turned toward the roof of the old town hall of Château-Plessis. Willing hands had raised two poles between the pointed towers, and now, from the roof, side by side with the heroic Tricolor, there floated the Star-Spangled Banner.

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